

“especially in this free Country:” Webs of Empire, Slavery and the Fur Trade

by

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Abbreviations

BWC Buffalo Wool Company

HBC Hudson's Bay Company

NWC North West Company

RAC Royal Africa Company

AO Archives of Ontario

BAnQ Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

BCA British Columbia Archives

HBCA Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba

LAC Library and Archives Canada

Abstract

Predicated on a narrative of mutuality and cooperation, what has come to be known as the Canadian fur trade has long been positioned as exceptional in its relationships between colonizers and Indigenous peoples. In this framing the fur trade in what would become Canada is represented as having experienced little of the colonial violence that manifested in other colonial encounters and has been constructed as devoid of the unfreedom of chattel slavery. In fact, this characterization is untrue.

Located within the French and British empires, the Canadian fur trade reflected the violences of its empires. From the seventeenth, and well into the nineteenth centuries chattel slavery existed in the fur trade as it did in the empires of which it was a part. Here, as elsewhere, complex webs of family/business relationships carried the violence of empire to and between its colonies. The creation and maintenance of these webs offered spaces where women as well as men could participate in the success of their family/businesses, but also in the transmission of colonial violence. One example of this is the Wedderburn Colvile family, their involvement in both West Indian plantation slavery and in the Hudson's Bay Company, and in the interventions of one of its members, Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk in what has become known as the fur trade wars. A closer look at the Wedderburn Colvile family and their interests in the Northern North American fur trade offers insights into how colonial violence and changes in the laws relating to chattel slavery impacted the fur trade, as the effects of these changes traveled along family/business webs of networks of relationship.

This research draws on primary sources gleaned from archives and libraries in Scotland, England, the West Indies, the United States and Canada. It brings together a wide range of secondary literature to argue that, just as in other parts of empire, colonial violence, including chattel slavery, connected through webs of family/business relationships, existed in the Canadian fur trade. At the same time, this project argues, the erasure of that story is something we are only now beginning to address.

Historical Language Note

References quoted in this research contain historical language which may be triggering and/or offensive. Where such language is included here, it is used because it is important to understanding the history and context of the topic. The appearance of such language in this document in no way implies its acceptability, nor does it endorse any sentiments expressed in such language.

All historical quoted material has been rendered without the use of “(sic),” and as close as possible to the way that it appears in the referenced source.

Introduction

In Canadian historiography, the Northern North American fur trade has been positioned as exceptional in its relationships between colonizers and Indigenous peoples, evidenced by its largely cooperative and peaceful relationships writ large in the absence of coerced or unfree labour. When Sarah Carter wrote that “In order for the Europeans to acquire [fur bearing animals], Aboriginal people could not be enslaved, captured, or forced into labour, as they were in parts of Meso- and South America; rather, their assistance was essential as both trapping and transporting required the expert knowledge of those best acquainted with the environment,”¹ she was reflecting what was, and had been for a very long time, the common wisdom of the day. In fact, however, this belief was not completely true. Connected by complex webs of family/business relationships to the rest of the colonial world, webs that, while gendered, could be and were created, managed, and maintained by both men and women, from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries the fur trade world across northern North America experienced and saw the same sorts of violences, both symbolic and literal violences, including chattel slavery, as the rest of the empires with which these webs connected. These webs of relationship could make it possible for these violences to travel through empires. Changes to slavery in the rest of the empire could and did impact the northern North American fur trade. The ties that connected and supported families and businesses could also be the ties that bound. Far from absent, colonial violence, both literal and symbolic, was a part of the fur trade just as it was a part of empire, writ large in the presence of chattel slavery.

Chattel slavery existed in the Northern North American fur trade. From New France, and later Quebec, through the pay d'en haut, the expanding regions of trade that extended west of Montreal, to the upper country, through “Rupert’s Land,” the “Hudson’s Bay Company’s Territories,” on the plains, and in the parklands, along Hudson Bay, and across the mountains in

¹ Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 36.

the Pacific North West, chattel slavery existed. It was practiced by individual fur traders, and by fur trading companies, by the members of the famous Beaver Club, by the legendary North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, and by less famous partnerships and operations. While less well documented, it was practiced by the rank-and-file as well as by the elite. Documented connections between fur traders and slavery in northern North America reach back into the seventeenth century and continued well into the nineteenth. The labour, skills, and knowledge of the enslaved could be used to expand traders' networks of relationship and thus increase not only trade but also their security. The enslaved could be and were used by their owners as investments or as compensation for outstanding debts. They could be rented out to other people. The enslaved could be Indigenous, sometimes referred to as "Panis," or they could be Black, and they could have come from North America, or from Africa, or from any of the many places enslaved people were forcibly taken, as well as from where they subsequently had children.

Slavery in what would become Canada existed, as it did in other parts of the French and British empires, not apart from empire, but linked, through complex spider's webs of networks of relationships, to the families, the laws, the mercantile practices, and the beliefs that formed and informed these empires and the people who constituted them. In this context chattel slavery in the fur trade, as in the rest of empire, existed alongside other forms of unfreedom including indenture, and other forms of violence including the construction of race. All of these forms of unfreedom were informed, shaped, and influenced by the empires to which they connected. Chattel slavery in the fur trade also existed in the context of other aspects of empire, particularly in the context of the violence of territorial expansion and the competition and wars between empires that spread both ideologically and literally onto North American soil. As Ned Blackhawk has demonstrated in his accounting of the complexities of violence, including slavery, in the American Great Basin in his book *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*, this is a topic that cannot be understood without understanding the larger picture of the complex imbrications involved in the violence of the colonial encounter. "Violence both predated and became intrinsic to American expansion," argues Blackhawk. "Violence enabled the rapid accumulation of new resources, territories, and subject peoples. It

legitimated the power of migrants, structured new social and racial orders, and provided the preconditions for political formation,” he writes.²

The webs of networks that connected the imperial worlds in this study, webs along which the violence of colonialism could pass, were neither purely business, nor purely family. They resembled and were in some ways influenced by genealogy, but never completely defined by it. They could incorporate extended family members and their own further extended families, could pull distant relations closer to their centres, could exile other members to their fringes, or could snip them out of the web completely. They could bring business connections into family relationships through mentorship or marriage. They could connect the worlds of the public and the intimate. And while they were gendered, they were not the sole domain of either men or women. In fact, they were one way that women could impact their family’s personal success and their business accomplishments.

Slavery existed as one particular incarnation of colonial violence. It is impossible to study slavery in the fur trade without considering its context, the complex ways that diverse forms of violence, both symbolic and physical, operated and changed over time. From the beginning of the fur trade in northern North America and well into the nineteenth century, a range of forms of unfreedom existed, and at times intersected. As Jennie Jeppesen writes, “The phrase ‘chattel slavery’ evokes a narrative of the Atlantic slave trade as people with African heritage were stolen, forced to labour under abhorrent conditions, and were powerless to prevent their children being sold away generation after generation.”³ However, as will be seen, not every chattel slave was Black, nor did every North American chattel slave labour on the sugar plantations of the United States or the West Indies. Slavery in what would become Canada could, and did, differ from plantation slavery, both in the sheer numbers of enslaved people involved, and in some cases in the types of work performed. But at its heart, the practice and practices of chattel slavery were about controlling people. In its most direct sense chattel slavery was about controlling

² Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 7, 9.

³ Jennie Jeppesen, “In the shadows between slave and free: A case for detangling the word ‘slave’ from the word ‘chattel’,” *Atlantic Studies*, 17:3, 399-418, 399.

workers. To do this, chattel slavery deployed race. Simply stated, chattel slavery created a condition of unfreedom wherein individuals were treated as property. They, their children and descendants were “a thing to be bought or sold,” where they did “not have the status of personhood.”⁴ This condition of slavery was not restricted to plantations or to warmer climates.

Significantly, as Jeppeson argues, “the word ‘slavery’ is not dependent on the term ‘chattel.’” As will be seen throughout this study, and as Jeppeson notes, “the unique experiences of North American slaves were due to their racial status not their chattel status.”⁵ For the purposes of this study, then, chattel slavery will be defined using these criteria, that chattel slavery in the fur trade existed where a person was owned, purchased, mortgaged, or sold, as chattel by another person, the susceptibility to being enslaved being racially constructed. Consistent with this, in North America, the “slave trade” can refer to both the chattel-based transatlantic slave trade, and the chattel trade in Indigenous persons. In both cases it is imbricated in and with the symbolic violence of racial construction. It is beyond this study, and my competence as a White woman living in the twenty-first century, to discuss the complex, nuanced, diverse and often locally expressed occurrences of the diverse forms of Indigenous captivity that could at times intersect with chattel slavery in the fur trade. Similarly, as a White woman I cannot claim or speak to any understanding of the actual experiences of slavery by enslaved persons. For this reason, I will not, throughout this study, attempt to represent or discuss slavery from the perspective of the enslaved.

In what is today Canada, the history of slavery in the fur trade has been obscured by historiographical practices and biases that continue to inform research today. Scholars of this slavery, including Harvey Amani Whitfield, T.W. Smith, and Robin Winks have identified ways in which archival records can obscure and disguise the practices of enslavement. In his book *North to Bondage*, Harvey Amani Whitfield writes that although there have been some excellent studies of slavery in Canada recently, “despite these outstanding efforts, slavery has not become

⁴ John Scott, *A Dictionary of Sociology*, 4th ed.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 685.

⁵ Jeppesen, “In the shadows between slave and free,” 399, 400.

part of the Canadian national narrative.”⁶ Whitfield’s assessment is consistent with a general perception that, until just lately, both popular and academic historiography has all but completely neglected the topic of slavery in the northern parts of British North America. Yet it is a curious fact that, despite these perceptions, at least some members of the academy have not entirely ignored chattel slavery’s long shadow in what is today Canada. Throughout the later nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, a small but persistent stream of works by historians have played the part of a sort of historiographical David to the Goliath of a strongly constructed national identity with little room for the idea that in terms of slavery, Canada has not always or only been a safe haven at the end of the Underground Railroad that shepherded escaped American slaves to freedom.

The Historiography of erasure

The historiography of slavery in Canada can be framed as one of erasure. Erasure in the lacunae and gaps in recordkeeping, and in the names and naming practices and terminologies that continue to make documentation difficult, but also in the historiography of slavery, which has itself been informed by colonial narratives. In 1859 La Société Historique de Montréal published an essay begun by Montreal mayor, founding member and first president of the Société,⁷ Jacques Viger and completed by L.H. Lafontaine. In *De l’esclavage en Canada*, the authors began their largely documentary exposition of the history of slavery in Canada with the words “L’Esclavage a-t-il existé en Canada? -- Oui, l’esclavage a existé en Canada.”⁸ In 1872, William Canniff in his *History of the Province of Ontario (Upper Canada)* discussed slavery in Canada in a chapter titled “Advance of Civilization.” Although Canniff’s chapter emphasized that Canadians had ended slavery early on, unlike the Americans, he also included slave advertisements and

⁶ Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 4.

⁷ Jean-Claude Robert, “VIGER, JACQUES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/viger_jacques_8E.html.

⁸ Jacques Viger, and L. H. Lafontaine. *De l’esclavage en Canada*. [Montréal]: [Imprimé par Duvernay frères], 1859. See also Jacques Viger, <<De l’esclavage en Canada,>> *Mémoires et documents relatifs à l’histoire du Canada*, (Montréal : La Société [Historique de Montréal], 1859), 1.

anecdotes about enslaved people in his writing.⁹ In 1887, the magazine *The Week* noted that an appendix to Cyprien Tanguay's extensive genealogical dictionary published in 1886 included clear references to enslaved people. "It is impossible to deny," the authors of the article quoted from Tanguay, "that slavery existed in Canada before and after the cession of the Colony. It existed, not only in fact, as is proved by the subjoined list, but also by right, or rather by law, as indeed Commander Jacques Viger clearly demonstrated in his memoir."¹⁰ In 1890, the Canadian Institute published a speech given to the organization by lawyer and author James Cleland Hamilton under the title *Slavery in Canada*.¹¹ The *History and biographical gazetteer of Montreal to the year 1892* published by James Borthwick included clear references to slavery in the city, and noted that the last slave sale in Montreal occurred in 1797, although the sale was later struck down.¹² In 1897, Hamilton published a 27 page pamphlet entitled *The Panis An Historical Outline of Canadian Indian Slavery in the Eighteenth Century*, which also appeared in the Canadian Institute's *Proceedings* for that year.¹³ In 1898, Jack Allen's essay "The *Loyalists and Slavery in New Brunswick*" was published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*.¹⁴ In 1899, Methodist minister and historian T. Watson Smith published an essay, based

⁹ See especially chapter lxxv, "Advance of Civilization," William Canniff, *History of the Province of Ontario, (Upper Canada), Containing a Sketch of Franco-Canadian History, the Bloody Battles of the French and Indians, the American Revolution, the Settlement of the Country by U.E. Loyalists, Trials and Hardships Incident to Pioneer Life, Thrilling Narratives of Adventures with Indians and Wild Beasts, Struggles for the Establishment of Christianity and Schools, Agriculture and Manufactures, the War of 1812, Battle Scenes, Capture of Buffalo, Subsequent Growth and Prosperity of the Country, Including Biographies of Prominent First Settlers and the Census of 1871* (Toronto: A.H. Hovey, 1872).

¹⁰ "Slavery in Canada," *The Week*, 4:21 (Apr. 21, 1887), (Toronto: C.B. Robinson, 1887), 333.

¹¹ James Cleland Hamilton, *Slavery in Canada* (np: 1890).

¹² J. Douglas Borthwick, *History and biographical gazetteer of Montreal to the year 1892* (Montréal: J. Lovell, 1892), 27-28.

¹³ James Cleland Hamilton, *The Panis An Historical Outline of Canadian Indian Slavery in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: Arbuthnot Bros. & Co., printers, 1897). This title also appears under the *Proceedings of the Canadian Institute* for this year, New series 1:1, pt. 1 (Feb. 1897) (Toronto: The Institute, 1897).

¹⁴ Allen Jack, "The Loyalists and Slavery in New Brunswick," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada* 4 (1898): 137-85. See also: D. G. Bell, "JACK, ISAAC ALLEN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 14, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jack_isaac_allen_13E.html.

on a paper he had read to the Nova Scotia Historical Society in March of 1898 entitled *The Slave in Canada*. In his preface, Smith expressed his frustration with general resistance to the idea that slavery ever existed in Canada, a frustration that historians have experienced both before and since, writing “If instances given seem too numerous, it must be remembered that the scepticism of many of the best informed Provincials as to the presence at any time of Negro slaves on the soil has challenged the production... of more repeated facts than he would otherwise have deemed necessary.”¹⁵ Smith’s book was noted in the *Canadian Magazine* in 1899, along with a quote from the essay where Smith stated that “Our historians have almost wholly ignored the existence of slavery in Canada. A few references to it are all that can be found in Kingsford’s ten volumes; Haliburton devotes a little more than a half-page to it; Murdoch contents himself with the reproduction of a few slave advertisements; Clement dismisses it with a single sentence.”¹⁶

As the twentieth century dawned, this corpus of work continued, as did Canadians’ lack of awareness. In 1906, the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec published a paper read before the society entitled *Slavery in Old Canada, Before and After the Conquest: Read Before the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, the 2nd March, 1906*.¹⁷ In April of 1919, Mrs. W.T. Hallam, B.A. presented a paper, “Slave Days in Canada,” to the Women’s Canadian Historical Society, the text of which was printed in *The Canadian Churchman*, and then reprinted as a stand-alone essay. “There was no Harriet Beecher Stowe,” Hallam began, “To tell the story of slavery in Canada, and few Canadian histories make any reference to the subject, so that many of our people have never heard of this by-gone institution.”¹⁸

Beginning in 1919, and into the 1930s, William Renwick Riddell, who combined a successful career in the law with a strong interest in history, published numerous articles on slavery in

¹⁵ T. Watson Smith, *The Slave in Canada* (Halifax, N.S.: Nova Scotia Print. Co, 1899), 1.

¹⁶ Smith, *The Slave in Canada*, 1; *The Canadian Magazine*, 13:6 (Oct. 1899)] (Toronto: Ontario Pub. Co., 1899), 581-582.

¹⁷ J. L. Hubert Neilson, *Slavery in Old Canada, Before and After the Conquest: Read Before the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, the 2nd March, 1906* (n.p.:1906).

¹⁸ Lillian Gertrude Best Hallam, *Slave Days in Canada*. Reprinted from the *Canadian Churchman* (Toronto: 1919), 3.

Canada.¹⁹ Many of these appeared in the American-based *Journal of Negro History*, but some were also published in the popular *Canadian Magazine*. Riddell's essays on slavery tended to be heavily documentary, leaning toward discussions of the law and legal aspects of enslavement, but left no question that slavery existed in the Canadas, beginning one of his essays by stating "That slavery existed in Canada before its conquest by Britain in 1759-60, there can be no doubt, although curiously enough it has been denied by some historians and essayists."²⁰ In 1941 and 1948, articles titled "The Negro in Canada," which appeared in the *Negro History Bulletin*, included references to slavery and slave holders in what is today Canada.²¹ Between 1945 and 1962, Edward Andrew Collard included columns titled "The Negro Slave in Montreal" in his regular column "All Our Yesterdays" in *The Gazette*.²² It is certainly true of the literature up to this point that the history of slavery in Canada tended to articles and essays, rather than full-

¹⁹ A biography of Riddell is available in the finding aid for the William Renwick Riddell fonds, PF61, Osgoode Hall, available online at: <https://lso.ca/about-lso/osgoode-hall-and-ontario-legal-heritage/collections-and-research/archival-finding-aids/william-renwick-riddell-pf61>. Accessed December 10, 2020.

²⁰ William Renwick Riddell, "Notes on Slavery: Before the Conquest." *The Journal of Negro History* 5 (July 1920), 263. Riddell was an exceptionally productive essayist on the topic of slavery in Canada, see, for instance, William Renwick Riddell, "Additional Notes on Slavery," *Journal of Negro History* 17 (July 1932), 368-373; "Notes on Slavery: Before the Conquest," *The Journal of Negro History* 5 (July 1920), 263-72; "Baptism of Slaves in Prince Edward Island," *Journal of Negro History* 6 (July 1921), 307-309; "Further Notes on the Slave in Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 9 (January 1924), 26-33; "Le Code Noir: Application in Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 10 (July 1925), 321-329; "Notes on Slavery in Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 4 (October 1919), 396-411; "Notes on the Slave in Nouvelle France," *Journal of Negro History* 7 (July 1923), 316-330; "Reciprocity of Slaves Between Michigan and Upper Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 17 (July 1932), 368-377; "The Slave in Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 5 (July 1920), 261-377; "The Slave in Upper Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 4 (October 1919), 373-395 (appeared also in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, May, 1919); "Slaves in Upper Canada," *Canadian Magazine* 54 (March 1920), 377-381; "Slavery in the Maritime Provinces," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 3 (1920): 359-75; "When Human Beings Were Real Estate," *Canadian Magazine* 57 (June 1921), 147-149. As well as these specific titles, Riddell also made note of slavery in other essays.

²¹ William Renwick Riddell, "The Negro in Canada," *Negro History Bulletin* 4, no. 7 (1941): 149-67; "The Negro in Canada," *Negro History Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (1948): 5-22.

²² Edward Andrew Collard, "All Our Yesterdays: Negro Slavery in Montreal," *The Gazette*, August 6, 1945, 8; August 13, 1945, 8; February 11, 1954, 3; January 3, 1953; August 4, 1956; March 3, 1962, 6; February 24, 1962; January 10, 1953, 6.

length books, offering, in essence, a discussion of a great many trees, but no discussion of the forest they were part of. This practice set these histories apart from full monographs that might have integrated them into larger national narratives, but they did keep the fact of slavery before the academy and before the public throughout the period.

Around 1960 the practice of writing about slavery in Canada in essay or article form rather than as a subject for larger monographs began to change. In 1960, historian Marcel Trudel published *L'esclavage au Canada français; histoire et conditions de l'esclavage*, which was translated and republished through the work of George Tombs under the title *Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage* in 2013. In 1990, Trudel's *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* made his extensive and painstaking research on slavery in French Canada available to historians and the public.²³ Robin Winks' 1971 book *The Blacks in Canada: A History* begins with chapters on slavery in New France and "Slavery, the Loyalists, and English Canada, 1760-1801."²⁴ Since then, there have continued to be a persistent and steadily growing stream of academic works by Canadian authors who have continued to assert the fact of slavery in Canada. Frank Mackey has produced works that follow in the tradition of being heavily documentary.²⁵ Charmaine Nelson's work has drawn attention to Black slavery in Canada. Harvey Amani Whitfield, who has himself contributed significantly to this field, lists among the ranks of important historians on this subject David Bell, Barry Cahill, Afua Cooper, Ken Donovan, Brett Rushforth, W.A. Spray, James Walker, as well as historians of Black

²³ Marcel Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l'esclavage Québec* (Presses universitaires Laval, 1960); Marcel Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français* (Ville LaSalle: Éd. Hurtubise, 1990); Marcel Trudel and George Tombs, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves: Two Centuries of Bondage* (Montréal, Québec, Canada: Véhicule Press, 2013).

²⁴ Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 1971, reprinted as Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). In 2000, Winks' book came out in a second edition, R. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History, Second Edition* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Frank Mackey, *L'Esclavage et les noirs à Montréal: 1760-1840*, trad. Hélène Paré (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2013) ; Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760–1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

Loyalists, while at the same time noting that “Despite all of their efforts, though, slavery has not become part of the national narrative. This makes sense because the historiography of slavery in Canada still lacks the basic overviews that allowed scholars of American slavery to pursue complicated topics.”²⁶

Looking at the historiography of slavery in Canada through the lens of what anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler calls “reading along the archival grain,” it is clear that the silences and lacunae in both the Canadian national identity and the work of the historical academy are neither accidental, nor passive. In fact, given the number of credible works by respected authors, published by accepted historical institutions, much of the lack of a Canadian consciousness about its own slavery past seems to hinge on a deliberate disregard for the literature. This is a kind of purposeful forgetting that is at the same time inviting historians today to take up the challenge Stoler threw out when she wrote “When Foucault urged us to ‘think the unthought’ with respect to our knowledge production, he directed us to explore the ‘landscape of shadow’ in which what we choose to think is located and by which it is framed.”²⁷ As Afua Cooper states, “slavery has been erased from the collective consciousness,” because “It is about an ignoble and unsavoury past, and because it casts Whites in a 'bad' light, they as chroniclers of the country's past, creators and keepers of its traditions and myths, banished this past to the dustbins of history.”²⁸ Given the number of interventions various historians have made over the decades to shine a spotlight on at least the presence of slavery in Canada, this erasure is something that bears consideration.

If this story of erasure is true for Canadian history as a whole, it is especially true of the history of slavery in the northern North American (Canadian) fur trade. In his 2001 historiographical essay “Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances and a hint of Future Prospects,” Michael Payne, referring to observations made by Jennifer S.H. Brown, noted that

²⁶ Harvey Amani Whitfield, “The Struggle over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies.” *Acadiensis*, 41:2. Retrieved from <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/20066>.

²⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), xiii.

²⁸ Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 8.

the field of fur trade history was “often used more as a convenient designation for a range of historical interests than to define a coherent field of study.” Drawing from L. G. Thomas’ 1973 historiographical study of the fur trade, Payne noted that a great deal of fur trade history was “not particularly focused on furs or trade, but ranges broadly across the fields of imperial and colonial history, exploration and discovery literature, the history of missions, immigration and settlement, corporate history and biography,” while more recent productions now included “social history concerns: everything from studies of social structure and social relations to gender and labour history.”²⁹ Missing from this extensive and expansive list of interests and from the literature more generally, is any stream of work focusing on chattel slavery.

In his discussion of Thomas’ list of significant contributions to the field of fur trade history, Payne notes that most of the books Thomas considered significant were written before 1945, the works themselves suggesting “a substantial level of agreement among historians in the period up to the 1960s about the nature of the fur trade in western Canada.” Citing historians and authors J.B. Tyrrell, W.S. Wallace, L.J. Burpee, A.S. Morton and H.A. Innis, Payne notes that their works all shared a vision of the fur trade as crucial to the formation of Canada as nation. But he also notes that these early writers identified the fur trade “as a integral part of the protracted struggle for control of the interior of North America between rival corporate and imperial interests.”³⁰ Read alongside Ned Blackhawk’s *Violence Over the Land*, in which he argues that the complex and often violent impacts of colonialism and imperialism visited upon the Great Basin Region of his study interacted with Indigenous slavery to create changes that defy any sort of simple, or as his title suggests, easy, narrative, the potential lacunae in these early works seems palpable.³¹ The process whereby the Ute peoples in his study adapted to imperial and colonial violence, Blackhawk argues, was profoundly changing, as “Utes responded in kind,” to the impacts of imperial and colonial expansion. “Like their neighbouring Indian and Spanish rivals, Utes remade themselves in response to the region’s cycles of violence and did so at the

²⁹ Michael, Payne, “Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances and a hint of Future Prospects,” in *From Ruperts Land to Canada: Essays in Honour of John E. Foster*, Theodore Binnema and John E. Foster, eds. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 3.

³⁰ Payne, “Fur Trade Historiography,” 4.

³¹ Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*.

expense of others, as violence and Indian slavery became woven into the fabric of everyday life throughout the early West.”³² Looking at the northern North American fur trade, and especially at the focused interests of early fur trade historians on imperial and colonial expansion and nation building, the absence of any significant discussion about the history of western chattel slavery in the context of the fur trade feels more like erasure than omission. An erasure that, perhaps not surprisingly, parallels the absence of any significant discussion of slavery in book-length Canadian histories of the period.

By the 1970s, as full-length works by authors like Winks and Trudel were establishing the presence of slavery as part of the national story of Canada, an emerging generation of historians found new ground to cultivate in the field of fur trade history. This was a time when Canadian history was confirmed as a legitimate subdiscipline, and when the lives of ordinary people, the subaltern, the quotidian, were increasingly acknowledged as the legitimate concern of historians. Using the tools of social and ethnohistory, and in some cases feminist history, interventions by historians including John Foster, Robin Fisher, Sylvia Van Kirk, Irene M. Spry, Olive Dickason, and Arthur Ray, as well as Jennifer S.H. Brown, who brought her training in anthropology to the topic during this period, dug into the lived experiences of men and women in the fur trade, foregrounding the importance of understanding relationships, culture, and cultural exchange. Beginning to shift their gaze away from Whiggish tales of imperial, colonial, and national progress, this new history saw, often for the first time, members of various classes, racial constructions, and genders, and their interactions and mutual dependencies.³³ Brown and Van Kirk in particular tackled the prickly issue of what was sometimes termed “fur trade marriage.” Brown in particular focused much of her work on relationships, exploring the fur trade as “a partial or incomplete social sphere.”³⁴ While Brown and Van Kirk’s work came from different

³² Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 6-7.

³³ Payne, “Fur Trade Historiography,” 6; Adele Perry, “Historiography that Breaks Your Heart: Sylvia Van Kirk and the Writing of Feminist History,” in *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women’s History in Canada*, Robin Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie Korinek, eds. (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 81-97, 83, 91-92.

³⁴ Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), xvii, personal communication, 14 December 2020.

places and took different approaches, their interventions had the effect of pushing back against categorizations of Indigenous women involved in fur trade relationships as “concubines,” or “slaves” to argue persuasively, as Brown has done, that the fur trade involved many different trajectories, and that “marriage à la façon du pays” could not be flatly viewed as either illegitimate or implying some sort of chattel unfreedom.

But while these interventions were both needed and generally welcomed, they may also have cast a curious shadow that has obscured the study of western chattel slavery in the fur trade. As will be seen later, while authors like Brown and Van Kirk clearly demonstrated that some fur trade relationships between men and women were in fact at least reasonably stable and mutual, representing at their best the “Many Tender Ties,” Van Kirk styled her book title after, some relationships were not. The focus of many works in this period on mutuality and agency, and the consequent lack of research relating to other, considerably less free relationships, whether economic, intimate, or some combination, may well have reflected what Adele Perry describes as a concern in the period for foregrounding research based in the principle of acknowledging agency that was imbricated in “a liberal feminism and grounded in a positivist naivete.”³⁵ As Brown has reflected, “The source materials are never as complete as we would wish for the distant, other worlds of the fur trade. And just as partiality in the sense of interest conditions our sources, so too it affects our outlooks in both constructive and limiting ways.”³⁶ At the same time, in her book *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, Brown noted the fact that fur traders, at least as early as the 1730s or 1740s on what is today the Canadian prairies, had been in the practice of purchasing female Indigenous captives, seeing them as chattel slaves, “at which time,” she notes, citing W. J. Eccles, “up to sixty Indian slaves a year had been sent to Montreal.”³⁷

While works that emphasized subaltern agency created methodologies that not only opened up, but in some cases looked away from, lines of inquiry, the colonial archive itself can be opaque

³⁵ Perry, “Historiography that Breaks your Heart,” 85.

³⁶ Jennifer S. H. Brown, *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land: Unfinished Conversations* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2017), 104.

³⁷ Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 88.

on the subject of enslavement and slavery. Fundamental problems of interpretation and naming muddy a great many archival references. As Whitfield has noted, identifying enslaved people in archival documents can be challenging to even the most dedicated researcher. Terms such as “servant” could be used to describe people who were in fact enslaved. Issues with re-enslavement further muddy the waters.³⁸ Brett Rushforth notes similar issues with the word “panis,” which became synonymous with “slave” in common use in New France and surrounding areas early on, and which, he argues, cannot be taken to imply any sort of specific Indigenous group identity or membership (i.e., “Pawnee”). Rushforth notes that, by 1719, categories in common use in French Colonial regulation such as “mulatto” and “negro” slave had become collapsed into a single identity: negro/negress, or even just “slaves,” and even the term nègre began to shift to “noir,” to avoid some of the philosophical and legal complications the word “nègre” might carry.³⁹ Further complicating the picture, in Canada, as with much of empire, attempting to pin freedom and unfreedom to opposing binary points is frustrated by the murky waters unfreedom inhabited. Indentured servitude, including that experienced by fur trade labourers, while, unlike chattel slavery, was bounded by a time limit, placed engagés in a position of relative unfreedom until their terms expired.⁴⁰ At the same time, as will be seen later, some enslaved persons were able to gain financial compensation, or even manumission, through their own labour. Further complicating this picture, as scholars including Van Kirk and Brown have demonstrated in their work, terms such as “concubine,” and the trope of fur trade marriage as a sort of slavery through a misreading of practices such as “bride price” mean that records must be approached with contextual sensitivity and read in depth.

Beyond these challenges, in fur trade records, names such as “the slave Indian,” could be used as a term of outsider derision rather than a description of literal slavery, having over time come to be used by fur traders to describe certain Indigenous groups. As Theodore Binnema notes, on the

³⁸ Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 11-13.

³⁹ Brett Rushforth. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 173, 355.

⁴⁰ Jeppesen, “In the shadows between slave and free,” *Atlantic Studies*, 17:3, 400; Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 144.

plains, the use of “Slave” to describe groups of Indigenous people probably came from “the Cree word for ‘Stranger,’ which apparently had some disparaging connotations and was sometimes translated as ‘Slave.’ ... The traders often used the term ‘Slave Indians’ to refer to various Plains bands (usually Blackfoot and Gros Ventre bands collectively). The names Great Slave Lake and Lesser Slave Lake also have their origins in this Cree sobriquet.”⁴¹ A similar process probably led to various Athapascan groups being burdened with the outsider names “Slave,” or “Slavey,” making the process of teasing out who was enslaved and who might have been called “Slave” as an outsider’s name for an entire group difficult, and sometimes simply impossible.⁴² And yet, despite these challenges, it is still possible within the colonial archive to find unambiguous references to slavery in the fur trade.

As already noted, in the recent historiography there are a small number of books that place the practice of slavery within the history of Canada, and at least make some note of the imbrications between fur trading and slavery. Because the geopolitical boundaries between French and English, and between British and American territory shifted during the same period that fur trade slavery was most prevalent in Canada, works relating to places like Detroit and Michilimackinac, which we might now think of as part of the “American” fur trade also provide important information about slavery, especially that relating to Montreal. As Trudel notes, Detroit and Michilimackinac only became American territory in 1796.⁴³ Tiya Miles’ *Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* and Brett Rushforth’s *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France*, along with Alan Gallay’s *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717*, and his edited *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* are all valuable sources of information on Canadian fur trade slavery, particularly as it relates to eastern fur traders.⁴⁴ Although his book lacks a depth of

⁴¹ Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 212 (fn 45).

⁴² John Collin Yerbury, “The Social Organization of the Subarctic Athapaskan Indians: An Ethnohistorical Reconstruction,” PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 1980, 19, 62-63.

⁴³ Trudel and Tombs, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, 62.

⁴⁴ Tiya Miles, *Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New York: The New Press, 2017); Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*; Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave*

analysis found in other of these books, Frank Mackey's book *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840* offers thoughtful and substantial proof and examples of enslavement relating to fur traders and the fur trade and should be included in the list of current books that contribute to a conversation about the history of slavery in the fur trade. Marcel Trudel's works on slavery are important resources for any researcher wanting to enter this field. Examining the other side of the continent, Donald Leland's book *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* addresses fur trade slavery in one of its chapters. But despite these interventions in the topic of slavery in the fur trade, and despite Karlee Sapoznik's *Manitoba History* article "Where the historiography falls short: La Verendrye through the lens of gender, race and slavery in early French Canada, 1731-1749,"⁴⁵ Adele Perry's welcome intervention "Vocabularies of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: The North American Fur-Trade and the Imperial World"⁴⁶ and Alice Beck Kehoe's helpful survey essay "Slaves" and Slave Raiding on the Northern Plains and Rupert's Land,"⁴⁷ a great deal of work remains to be done. This is especially the case in the area of understanding the relationships between colonial and imperial networks and violence and how this played out in terms of slavery in the space once known as "Rupert's Land." It is well beyond the scope of this chapter to even begin to cover all of the ground that this gap leaves.

Although the historiography of the fur trade in what would become western Canada is, to date, lacking in a corpus of work focusing specifically on slavery and unfreedom, some historians, ethnohistorians, and anthropologists have noted and acknowledged slavery within the fur trade as part of other work. As already noted, Jennifer S.H. Brown has noted fur trade slavery based out

Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Allan Galloway, ed. *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Karlee Sapoznik, "Where the Historiography Falls Short: La Vérendrye through the Lens of Gender, Race and Slavery in Early French Canada, 1731-1749," *Manitoba History*, 62 (2009), 22-33.

⁴⁶ Adele Perry, "Vocabularies of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: The North American Fur-Trade and the Imperial World," *Australian Historical Studies*, 45:1, 34-45, DOI: 10.1080/1031461X.2013.877504.

⁴⁷ Alice Beck Kehoe, "Slaves" and Slave Raiding on the Northern Plains and Rupert's Land," in *Human Expeditions: Inspired by Bruce Trigger*, Andre Costopoulos, Stephen Chrisomalis, and Kathryn A. Bard, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 31-40.

of Montreal. As will be seen, Toby Morantz and later, Daniel Francis,⁴⁸ Roland Bohr,⁴⁹ and Scott Stephen,⁵⁰ have all acknowledged the HBC's use of unfree Indigenous labour around Hudson Bay, as have Edith Burley,⁵¹ Victor Lytwyn⁵² and Arthur Ray.⁵³ E.S. Rogers discussed Inuit slaves in the fur trade in his 1984 article "Paul Kane and the spirit chief of Norway House,"⁵⁴ and John S. Long, Richard J. Preston, Katrina Srigley and Lorraine Sutherland included fur trade slaves and slavery in their article "Sharing the Land at Moose Factory in 1763."⁵⁵ While seeking to qualify the degree of unfreedom slavery in the HBC might have meant to Indigenous slaves, Renée Fossett also discusses Indigenous people identified as "slaves" in fur trade records,⁵⁶ and James G.E. Smith wrote about the Company "continuing to learn [about the region] from [the Chipewyan] through an apparently continuing supply of redeemed slaves."⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Daniel Francis and Toby Elaine Morantz, *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

⁴⁹ Roland Bohr, *Gifts from the Thunder Beings: Indigenous Archery and European Firearms in the Northern Plains and Central Subarctic, 1670-1870* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

⁵⁰ Scott P. Stephen, *Masters and Servants: The Hudson's Bay Company and Its North American Workforce, 1668-1786* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2019).

⁵¹ Edith Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵² Victor P. Lytwyn, *Muskekowuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swampy Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002).

⁵³ James Knight and Arthur J. Ray, *Life and death by the frozen sea: the York Fort Journals of Hudson's Bay Company Governor James Knight, 1714-1717* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2018).

⁵⁴ E.S. Rogers, "Paul Kane and the spirit chief of Norway House." *Rotunda Magazine* 17:2 (1984): 34-39.

⁵⁵ John S. Long, Richard J. Preston, Katrina Srigley and Lorraine Sutherland, "Sharing the Land at Moose Factory," *Ontario History*, 109:2, Fall 2017, 167-292.

⁵⁶ Renée Fossett, *In Order to Live Untroubled: Inuit in the Central Arctic, 1550 to 1940* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000).

⁵⁷ James G. E. Smith, "Chipewyan, Cree and Inuit Relations West of Hudson Bay, 1714-1955." *Ethnohistory*, 28:2, 137.

On the Northwest Coast of North America, as with all the other areas so far discussed, a similar historiographical picture arises. In his book *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843*, Richard Mackie discusses slavery and unfree labour, and Leland Donald touches on the subject in his *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America*.⁵⁸ Adele Perry's "Vocabularies of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: The North American Fur-Trade and the Imperial World" provides perhaps the most focused look at the intersections of fur trade and unfree labour by examining the work that Imperial language used around slavery and abolition performed in the fur trade of British North America, while comparing this with Australia.⁵⁹ Earlier authors have also interjected some discussion of the fur trade and slavery on the West Coast, including Frederick Merk's *Fur Trade and Empire*, and Thomas Jesset's introduction to *The Reports and letters, 1836-1838, of Herbert Beaver, chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*,⁶⁰ although in both these latter cases, the authors' focus is on a struggle by Britain through the Hudson's Bay Company's officials on the West Coast to deal with and contain the potential issues raised by the practice of HBC employees and their wives owning slaves, while framing this as part of a larger picture of Indigenous slavery in the region.

Exploring the story of colonial violence and chattel slavery in the Northern North American fur trade cannot be done in a vacuum. A wider understanding of chattel slavery within the context of both the fur trade and of empire and their intersections is essential when discussing Northern North American fur trade slavery. To begin this process, a brief overview survey of connections between the Hudson's Bay Company's London Committee and some of its chief early investors with other expressions of the business of chattel slavery in the British Empire up to 1799 offers insights into the culture that underwrote this major player in the Northern North American fur trade. 1799 was chosen as an end date here because by this point public pressure was mounting

⁵⁸ Donald Leland, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ Perry, "Vocabularies of Slavery and Anti-Slavery."

⁶⁰ Thomas Jesset, "Introduction," in Herbert Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838, Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver* (Portland, OR: Champoeg Press, 1959), xi-xxiv.

in some circles to end slavery, and many people saw the handwriting on the wall. If slavery on the ground in northern North America east of the Rockies was not waning, it is still difficult to quantify actual practice in this context. By 1799, mentions of chattel slavery were certainly appearing less, or less frankly in the archival record that was canvassed for this research. The brief survey that follows here only considers connections to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina (a number of whom would go on to similar activities in the West Indies), and the Royal Africa Company. Both undertakings were significantly enmeshed in slavery. A deeper study of investments that did not confer proprietorship, and of other companies, particularly the East India Company, would almost certainly expand the list produced by this research.

Slavery and the HBC's Committee to 1799

The Hudson's Bay Company was born into a web of connections between money and power, and it was along this web that it moved. In their book *British Imperialism: 1688-2015*, Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins advanced the theory that what they termed "gentlemanly capital," essentially a marriage between landed interests and "The City," between London and landowners in the south-east of England the heart of British economic and political life, joined together through a gentlemanly ethic in the area of service capitalism, beginning in Restoration England. In doing this, they argue that the "export version" of this gentlemanly order was at the heart of imperialism.⁶¹ Although the reach of Cain and Hopkins' work, their attempt to explain the complex world of British imperialism through a single and substantially centralized and hierarchical phenomenon, does not capture the complex and dynamic nature of the British Empire, read alongside Carolyn Podruchny and Nicole St. Onge's essay "Scuttling Along a Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis," the idea of gentlemanly capital as enmeshed in and constructive of spider's webs of relationship suggests a useful model for understanding the complex, sometimes delicate, dynamic relationships that connected imperial projects and people.⁶² In their article, Podruchny and St. Onge draw on the work of Tony

⁶¹ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 91.

⁶² Carolyn Podruchny and Nicole St. Onge, "Scuttling Along a Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*,

Ballantyne, noting that “Ballantyne used the metaphor of webs to transcend centre-periphery models of empire and bounded models of nation-states.” Ballantyne’s model, they argue, accommodates the dynamic nature of relationships that form empires, and allows for horizontal linkages.⁶³ Like Ballantyne, and Podruchny and St. Onge, this chapter and those that follow emphasize the idea of webs of relationships, positing them as the networks on which impulses of violence, like those discussed by Ned Blackhawk in his book *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*,⁶⁴ and including various forms of unfreedom, can travel sometimes exceptional distances. The use of the idea of the metaphor of spider’s webs, as will be seen throughout this research, can also expose the subtlety, the fragility, but also the flexibility and resilience of the networks along which the imperial project and its associated violences could manifest and travel.

Read in this context, Cain and Hopkins’ analysis of the importance of the coming together of power and money to inspire, organize, and resource some aspects of the imperial project is useful in understanding how companies like the Royal African Company (RAC) and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) formed and operated during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. In this environment, groups of individuals often styled “adventurers,”⁶⁵ working through and between social, political, and business networks, generated “gentlemanly capital.” In this context, the ability to create and maintain critical social relationships was an area that not only impacted the private sphere of family and friendship, it was also a critical skill in the public spheres of politics and business. Family relationships, forged through marriage and consanguinity, could be a significant tool in this process of linking aristocratic political power

Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 59–92.

⁶³ Podruchny and St. Onge, “Scuttling Along a Spider’s Web,” 63.

⁶⁴ Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*.

⁶⁵ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 336. See the charters of the EIC, HBC and RAC for examples of the use of this term. For example, the Royal African Company was actually styled “The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa.” William Andrew Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 23.

and capital to imperial business interests.⁶⁶ At a time when joint stock companies were on the ascendancy as a way to manage the risk and optimize the rewards of an expanding imperial trade, being able to draw together and maintain trustworthy relationships between groups of shareholders was critical.⁶⁷

By thinking of business undertakings in the period after 1660 as manifested aspects of webs of dynamic networks of business/family associations, as complex and often gossamer webs that could at times be barely visible, but were, nonetheless integral to the operation of companies like the HBC and RAC, it is easy to see how many of the same networks of families, groups and individuals might be involved in more than one business venture. This was certainly the case for investors connected with the fur trading Hudson's Bay Company and the more infamous Royal African Company. The RAC had originally been organized under a British monopoly to trade on the west coast of Africa. In 1663, the RAC's charter was amended; this amendment included, specifically, a monopoly on the west African slave trade, for which the RAC is most often known today.⁶⁸ Despite what might seem like a dissimilarity in the stated business interests of the two companies, as will be seen following, there is a significant intersection between their investors and governors, beginning with the companies' earliest formations.

Connections between families and between families and business, between power and capital, also meant that political and personal conflicts that arose in these relationships could manifest and travel along the threads of the webs these relationships formed and were formed by. As Elizabeth Mancke notes in her article "The Hudson's Bay Company and the Management of Long-Distance Trade," the RAC, founded in 1660, the Carolina Company founded in 1665, and the HBC founded in 1670 "shared as principal promoters a group of courtiers influential in the

⁶⁶ Cain and Hopkins. *British Imperialism*, 6.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Mancke "The Hudson's Bay Company and the management of long-distance trade, 1670-1730," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, University of British Columbia, 1984, 4-10 and ff; Hugh Grant, "Bookkeeping in the Eighteenth Century: The Grand Journal and Grand Ledger of the Hudson's Bay Company," *Archivaria* 43 (1997): 143-57, 143.

⁶⁸ Although beyond the scope of this work, there was also a similar sort of overlap between these companies and the East India Company. K.G. Davies *The Royal African Company* (London: Routledge Press, 1999), 41.

Restoration court.” Much as Blackhawk argues that European imperial expansion brought European conflicts and rivalry into the lives of Indigenous peoples in the Great Basin, Mancke notes that these companies’ founders were “intent upon territorial and economic jockeying with [their] European rivals.”⁶⁹ The RAC was managed by James, duke of York (who became King James II) and Prince Rupert, King Charles II’s brother and cousin respectively. Not coincidentally, as will be seen below, both of these men and a number of others were involved in the organization and management of a company known as The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson Bay (HBC). Other connections are also apparent, for instance, a number of the early investors in the HBC were also members of the original eight Lords Proprietors of Carolina, a venture that, as Allan Gallay notes, not only did not oppose Black slavery, but assumed it would be part of the development of the Carolinas.⁷⁰ As will be seen below, six of this group, five with connections to the HBC were later granted proprietorship in the West Indies.

A later chapter will consider the government of the Company towards the end of the long eighteenth century. Looking at the list of Governors of the Hudson’s Bay Company up to the end of the eighteenth century, there is a significant intersection with directors of the Royal African Company.⁷¹ Prince Rupert, the Company’s first Governor (served 1670-1682), James, duke of York, later James II the Company’s second governor (served as governor 1683-1685), Sir Stephen Evans/Evance, the Company’s fourth and sixth governor (served 1692-1696, and 1700-1712), the financial manipulator who leveraged stock in the East India Company to shore up the HBC, Sir Bibye Lake, who served as seventh governor (1712-1743), and Sir Atwell [Atwill] Lake, tenth governor (1750-1760) and son of Sir Bibye Lake, were all directors of the

⁶⁹ Mancke “The Hudson’s Bay Company and the management of long-distance trade,” 14.

⁷⁰ Alan Gallay, “South Carolina’s Entrance into the Indian Slave Trade,” in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, Alan Gallay, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 109-146, 109.

⁷¹ See a list of these governors in Wilson Beckles, *The Great Company Being a History of the Honorable Company of Merchants-adventurers Trading Into Hudson's Bay* (Copp, Clark Company, limited, 1899), 531.

Royal African Company. In fact, Sir Bibye Lake served as sub-governor of the RAC.⁷² In total, from its founding to 1799, the HBC had thirteen distinct periods of governorships, occupied by a total of twelve different men. Of these thirteen periods, six were occupied by men who also held positions in the RAC, and whose periods of directorship covered approximately 71 of the 129 years between 1670 and 1799. Additionally, Sir William Baker, who was director for the ten years from 1760 to 1770 was a mortgagee in West Indian plantations, and co-proprietor of the Hobcaw Barony in the Carolinas for a period of time.⁷³ Adding his ten years as a director with the HBC brings the total to 81 years out of 129 where the governor of the Company had direct and clearly visible ties to businesses involved in some way with slavery. While beyond the scope of this chapter, the tenure and influence of some of these men at the HBC went beyond the periods of their governorships. As well, other investors in the HBC had connections that tied them to slavery within the British Empire.

The original Hudson's Bay Company's royal charter was signed on 2nd May 1670 by 18 shareholders. As a way into understanding the web of networks that converged at the Hudson's Bay Company, a brief look at some of the business and family connections of some of those individuals is helpful. In his article "The 'Adventurers of England Trading Into Hudson's Bay': A Study of the Founding Members of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1665–1670," Barry Gough identified five key men involved in the founding of the HBC, a group he framed as "the influence group," that is, a group of individuals who had connections with the court of Charles II. This group consisted of Prince Rupert, George Monck the duke of Albemarle (father of Christopher, who was a signatory to the HBC Charter), William Craven the Earl of Craven, Anthony Ashley Cooper Lord Shaftesbury, and Sir Henry Bennet Lord Arlington.⁷⁴ All five of

⁷² Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) Biographical Sheet: "Lake, Bibye (Sir)", available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/l/lake_bibye1712-1743.pdf. Accessed on 16 December 2020; Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*, 23, 25, 29, 201, 238.

⁷³ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Sir William Baker Alderman of City of London." Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146650157>. Accessed 10 December 2020.

⁷⁴ Barry Gough, "The 'Adventurers of England Trading Into Hudson's Bay': A Study of the Founding Members of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1665–1670," *Albion*, 2:1, 35-47, 40; E. E. Rich, ed. *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1671-1674* (Toronto: Champlain Society, for

these men had been at the time of the Restoration, and continued to be afterward, supporters of the monarchy.⁷⁵ Of the men Gough identifies as “the influence group,” three, George Monck duke of Albemarle, the Earl of Craven, and Lord Shaftesbury were also named Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas, along with other early HBC investors, Sir George Carteret and Sir Peter Colleton.⁷⁶ A powerful coalition of eight supporters of Charles II, the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas were given immense land grants in exchange for undertaking to assert British authority in the region, while developing the area to create income for the Crown.⁷⁷ In 1670, six of these Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas also obtained, through the considerable influence of Anthony Ashley Cooper (created Earl of Shaftesbury in 1672), proprietorship of the Bahamas. In addition to his role with the Lords Proprietors, Shaftesbury also had interests in Barbados and Guinea, and as early as 1646 had been the joint owner of a plantation that included nine Black adult slaves.⁷⁸ Of the six Lords Proprietors granted proprietorship of the Bahamas, five, Albemarle, Craven, Shaftesbury, Carteret, and Colleton had connections to the HBC.⁷⁹

Comparing the names of signatories to the HBC charter with members of the RAC exposes more threads of connection. As already discussed, Prince Rupert, the HBC’s first governor and a signatory to the HBC charter, was also a director of the RAC. So were other charter signatories and important early investors. George Monck, duke of Abermarle, was the father of Christopher Monck, second duke of Albemarle, who was only sixteen at the time he signed the HBC charter.

the Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1942), 223-224; John Debrett. *Debrett's Peerage of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, vol 1, 1823, 16.

⁷⁵ Rich, ed. *Minutes of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1671-1674*, 213-214, 216, 220, 223.

⁷⁶ Rich, ed. *Minutes of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1671-1674*, 216-217, 218, 221-223, 240-241.

⁷⁷ Milton Ready, *The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2020), 39.

⁷⁸ W. Hubert Miller, "The Colonization of the Bahamas, 1647-1670." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1945), 33-46, 45-46; Kenneth Harold Dobson Haley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 230.

⁷⁹ Sandra Riley, *Homeward Bound: A History of the Bahama Islands to 1850 with a Definitive Study of Abaco in the American Loyalist Plantation Period* (Miami, Fla: Island Research, 2000), 37.

E.E. Rich posits that Christopher may have been fronting for his father when he took on this position. For his own part, Christopher Monck, duke of Albermarle held the position of Governor of Jamaica for a short period, during which time he sided with the local planters who wanted better access to slaves and slave labour, against the RAC, who had been carefully controlling the supply of enslaved people transported to the island.⁸⁰ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Ashley, the Earl of Shaftesbury; William Craven, Earl of Craven; and Sir Henry Bennet, Lord Arlington were all directors of the RAC.⁸¹ As with the Moncks, Gough suggests that Sir Philip Carteret was representing his father Sir George Carteret in his dealings with the HBC. Sir George Carteret was also a director of the RAC.⁸² Sir John Robinson invested in the RAC, as did Peter Colleton.⁸³ Pettigrew lists a Francis Millington, possibly the same Francis Millington who signed the HBC charter, as an independent slave trader.⁸⁴ E.E. Rich describes this Millington as “a Customs Commissioner of London, connected by blood and interest with the banking circles of the City.” Millington’s wife’s uncle was another signatory to the Charter, Sir Robert Vyner.⁸⁵

Sir Robert Vyner was also a director of the RAC.⁸⁶ In a truly macabre twist, Samuel Pepys, in his diary for the 7th of September, 1665 wrote of a visit to Vyner’s house that “He showed me a black boy that he had, that died of a consumption, and being dead, he caused him to be dried in an oven, and lies there entire in a box.”⁸⁷ Other early HBC investors include John Portman, who

⁸⁰ Frank Cundall, “Jamaica Governors: Christopher, Duke of Albemarle,” *West Indies Chronicle*, Vol. 3, January 1922, 250-251; Rich, ed. *Minutes of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1671-1674*, 239.

⁸¹ Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 23, 25, 237, 250.

⁸² Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 25, Gough, “The ‘Adventurers of England Trading Into Hudson’s Bay,’ 39.

⁸³ Davies, *The Royal African Company*, 64.

⁸⁴ Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 231.

⁸⁵ E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1670-1870. Volume 1: 1670-1763* (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1958), 32.

⁸⁶ Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 239.

⁸⁷ Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt*, 239; Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, (Random House Edition) vol 2 (New York: Random House, n.d.), 46.

was treasurer to the Carolina Company.⁸⁸ Lady Margaret Drax (nee Bampffield) was the widow of James Drax, a noted plantation and slave owner in Barbados. Bampffield Drax was also godmother to Rachell, daughter of James Hayes, another signatory to the HBC charter.⁸⁹ Lady Margaret Drax's husband James Drax had arrived in the Bahamas in 1627 with few resources. Having managed to produce a successful tobacco crop that year, which he took to England and sold, he was able to bring back forty servants. Moving to cotton and ginger when tobacco prices fell, then to sugar when cotton prices dropped, Drax used the profits from his plantation to purchase increasingly large amounts of land and numbers of slaves; 200 slaves were working his land in 1654.⁹⁰

From these examples it is clear that personal and family relationships formed integral parts of the webs of gentlemanly capital. Isabella, the daughter of Henry Bennet, Lord Arlington, was five years old when she married the eight-year-old Henry FitzRoy, duke of Grafton, son of Charles II and his mistress the Duchess of Cleveland in 1672. The couple were "remarried" in 1679. This marriage was clearly one that suited the parents, bringing together power and wealth through personal relationship. In his diary of 6th November 1679, John Evelyn described the remarriage, to which he had been invited by Isabella's mother, saying "I confess I could give [Isabella's mother] little joy, and so I plainly told her; but she said the King would have it so, and there was no going back."⁹¹

The Churchill family is another example of the complex and intricate ways that relationships could come together into webs. Sir John Churchill, later duke of Marlborough, served as the third

⁸⁸ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 39; Rich, ed. *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1671-1674*, 222.

⁸⁹ Rich, ed. *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1671-1674*, 224-225.

⁹⁰ Larry Dale Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 140.

⁹¹ Alexander Francis Chamberlain, *The Child and Childhood in Folk-thought: (The Child in Primitive Culture)* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1896), 230; John Evelyn, *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn: To which is Subjoined the Private Correspondence Between King Charles I. and Sir Edward Nicholas, and Between Sir Edward Hyde, Afterwards Earl of Clarendon, and Sir Richard Browne*, Volume 2, (H. Colburn, 1854), 143.

Governor of the HBC from 1685-1692. Churchill's father Sir Winston Churchill had been a supporter of Charles I, which positioned Sir Winston, and through him his children, well when Charles II ascended to the throne. Sir John Churchill's sister Arabella subsequently became lady-in-waiting to *Anne Hyde*, Duchess of York, and then mistress to James, duke of York. A number of historians have assessed the impact of this relationship on John's career, for instance, Stephen Saunder Webb states that "Arabella opened James' household to her brother John and put him on the royal road to favor, fame, and fortune." John Churchill himself had an affair with Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, who had been mistress to Charles II, and who was able to use her intimacy with the monarch to promote Churchill's interests. And finally, John Churchill married Sarah Jenyns, who became, shortly after their marriage, maid-of-honour and later lady-of-the-bedchamber, to the duke of York's daughter Anne (later Queen Anne).⁹²

For many years a trusted confidant of Queen Anne's, Jenyns Churchill was able to use her position at court to support her husband's career politically. However, Jenyns Churchill was also the financial mind behind the Churchill family fortune. "Sarah Churchill was undeniably one of the most influential public investors, male or female, in the first twenty-five years of the Financial Revolution," notes Amy Froide. Not only did Jenyns Churchill manage her family's and her own wealth skillfully - a wealth that served to position them well even after she and Queen Anne had had a falling out - her financial acumen may have been part of what made her a valuable ally to the Queen in the first place. In fact, it may have been the Queen's respect for this acumen that allowed Sarah, in 1710, to give the Queen advice that kept Jenyns Churchill's son in law Lord Sunderland in his position as Lord Treasurer.⁹³ Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland was also one of the people who vied unsuccessfully for the directorship of the RAC in 1720.⁹⁴ Although the threads that made up these webs of relationship may be sometimes hard

⁹² Stephen Saunder Webb, *Lord Churchill's Coup: The Anglo-American Empire and the Glorious Revolution Reconsidered* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 48-49; Leo Damrosch, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World* (Yale University Press, 2013), 164; Thomas Babington Macaulay, Baron Macaulay, *The History of England, from the Accession of James II*, vol 1, (Harper & brothers, 1898), 348.

⁹³ Amy M. Froide, *Silent Partners: Women As Public Investors During Britain's Financial Revolution, 1690-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 68-69.

⁹⁴ Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*, 168.

to tease out, intimate relationships were an integral part of the webs of relationship that created and sustained gentlemanly capital. Figure 1 below is a relationship map illustrating some of the relationships within the HBC's London Committee and major shareholders as well as their connections to the Lords Proprietor and the RAC.

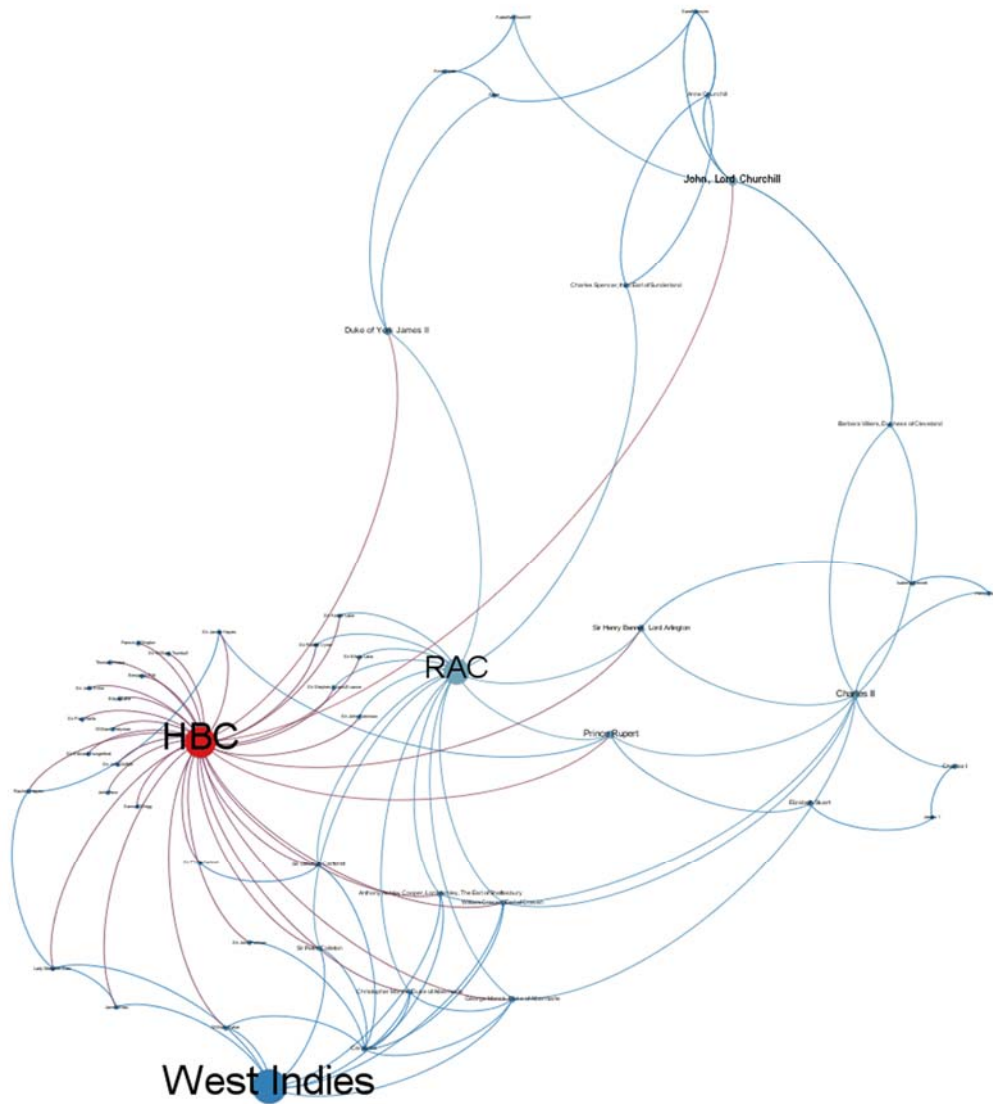


Figure 1: HBC London Committee and Major Early Shareholders Relationship Map.

This brief survey of the webs of relationship that connected investors, and through them, companies, with each other only scratches the surface of the complex and deep networks along which social and financial capital, and colonial violence, could travel. Much more research is needed to track investments, loans of money and resources, and other traces of these relationships and to build a fuller understanding of how they interacted and impacted various colonial projects. As Froide notes, investments, in the case of both male and female elite investors, were often accounted under other people's names.⁹⁵ The need for a greater scrutiny is particularly true in the case of research into both how women fit into this picture, and how intimate relationships contributed to these webs. For the present, it is clear that the early investors and governors of the Hudson's Bay Company, linked through webs of gentlemanly capital, were no strangers to the violence of chattel slavery.

Overview of Chapters

This study is broken into six chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. Of the six numbered chapters, the first three discuss chattel slavery on the ground in the Northern North American fur trade of what would become Canada. These first three chapters establish the fact that slavery existed in the fur trade of Northern North America as much as it existed anywhere else in the French and British empires. Read in the context of the involvement of many of the HBC's London Committee and some of its important early investors, as well as the transnational business interests of some eastern fur traders, these chapters demonstrate that chattel slavery in Northern North America existed as part of the Imperial project, connected to it by business/family relationship webs. Taken together, these three chapters also hint at the ways in which the territorial machinations of European empires intersected with and informed both the fur trade generally and chattel slavery in the fur trade particularly. As examples, the Royal Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company as well as the British Conquest, coming out of as it did the Seven Years War in Europe, can both be read as influencing the presence and expression of chattel slavery in the regions these events impacted. The survey these three chapters provide offers a foundation for the discussions covered in the remaining three chapters.

⁹⁵ Froide, *Silent Partners*, 71.

The second group of three chapters take a closer look at networks of relationships, how they could be formed, managed, and manipulated, and the violences they could channel. These chapters begin at the end of the long eighteenth century, and amid the conflict between the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, conflict that had its roots, in some ways, in the economic disruptions of the Napoleonic Wars, but also in the impact that changes in public opinion and British law were having on the West Indian sugar-slave trade. This group begins with an overview of the complex and transatlantic networks of relationships that were formed by and formed complexes of family and business in this period, then moves on to a microhistory of the labour Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk performed in, with, and to her webs of relationship; work that sustained the colonial violence of what has come to be known as the fur trade wars, and particularly the very frank violence that accompanied the creation of the Selkirk or Red River Colony at the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, a settlement that is today known as Winnipeg. This group of chapters finishes with a survey of two projects that demonstrate some of the ways that unfreedom changed in the context of the decline of legalized chattel slavery throughout the British Empire, and the connections between the impacts of these changes in the heart of the North American continent, in the sugar brokerage houses of London, and in the West Indies.

Chapter one, “‘In the possession of the French and Canadians to who they belong:’⁹⁶ Slavery and the fur trade in the east,” explores slavery and family connections within the eastern fur trade centred around Montreal but also including Michilimackinac and Detroit. It begins with connections in New France before moving on to the changes and continuities after 1760 when New France became British territory, and attempts to untangle, at least partially, some of the complicated webs of family and business relationships that structured much of the fur trade. This chapter explores the involvement of women as well as men in both fur trading and slave ownership and discusses the possible importance of enslaved people in furthering the networks of alliance and kinship that were essential to success in the fur trade.

⁹⁶ Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 76-77.

Chapter two, “‘Which, on my refusal, Poitras purchased:’⁹⁷ Slavery, unfreedom, and the fur trade in the pays d’en haut” looks at slavery in the fur trade in the upper country, considers the life trajectories of several enslaved people and their descendants, as well as looking at the responses of fur trade company officials to the practice of slavery by their colleagues, opponents, and workers. It also briefly considers the connections between the racialized unfreedom of chattel slavery and the degrees of freedom that other workers in the fur trade experienced, and discusses the challenges that language poses to the researcher trying to identify incidents of chattel slavery in the archival record.

Chapter three, “‘y^e Comp^{ies} Slaves:’⁹⁸ Slavery in Northern North America under the Hudson’s Bay Company,” looks at the involvement of the Hudson’s Bay Company and their servants in slavery along the James Bay/Hudson Bay coastline and in what is today British Columbia, along the Pacific Northwest Coast. In doing this this chapter clearly demonstrates the knowledge and complicity of the Company’s London Governor and Committee in the practice of chattel slavery, but also examines some of the challenges researchers face when trying to identify incidents of enslavement within the Company’s records. This chapter also demonstrates the fur trade countenance of slavery on the west coast well into the 1830s.

Chapter four, “‘The grounds and walks are joined to ours by a bridge:’⁹⁹ Spiders’ webs of relationship in the triangular trade,” considers the complex, transatlantic family business networks that connected fur trade slavery to other locations of slavery within the British Empire. These networks were living things, tended, trimmed, and augmented by actors, both male and female. Well formed, they provided a base of support that allowed the webs’ members to move

⁹⁷ John Macdonell, “John Macdonell, Journal, Assiniboines and Rivière Qu'Appelle, 1793-1795,” An electronic transcription. MFTP #0007, McGill University, In Pursuit of Adventure, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm. Accessed 10 December 2020.

⁹⁸ HBCA B.239/b/1 f 25d, York Factory Correspondence Book, 1718-1720, Henry Kelsey to T. McCleish Jr, 18 January 1720.

⁹⁹ “Lord Auckland to Lord Grenville, 2 October 1810,” in Francis Bickley, Walter FitzPatrick, William Wyndham Grenville, and J. B. Fortescue. *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*. vol. 10 (London: H.M.S.O., 1927), 53.

both literally and figuratively across oceans and across business opportunities. One of the family/business networks outlined in this chapter, that of the extended Wedderburn family, will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Chapter five, “‘The plan I have laid for you.’¹⁰⁰ Women, Webs of Relationship and Jean Wedderburn Douglas,” uses microhistory to explore family/business networks in the transatlantic lives of the extended Wedderburn family, whose business interests reached from Britain to the Caribbean and, in the early years of the nineteenth century, to the northern North American fur trade. The insertion of the Wedderburn family into the workings of the fur trade can be traced to two imperial events, first, the Napoleonic Wars, the fallout from which had temporarily crippled the Hudson’s Bay Company’s fur sales, making the Company ripe for a takeover, and second, the imminent decline of legalized chattel slavery throughout the British empire under the weight of growing public pressure, which influenced a number of people involved in the industry to look to diversify into other potential fields of investment. One of these people was Andrew Wedderburn Colvile. The interventions of the extended Wedderburn family, which included, through marriage, Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, resulted in an increase in violence on the ground in the fur trade, at least some of it sparked by the introduction by Lord Selkirk of a colony at Red River. Understanding the part Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk, Thomas Douglas’ partner played in some of the most violent years in this period offers important insights into how networks of relationship informed and were informed by both imperial and local events, as well as offering some food for thought about how and how much women might at times impact this.

The years following 1820 brought significant changes to the fur trade, some of these changes are explored in chapter six, “‘An appearance of regularity and civilization’.¹⁰¹ The Red River

¹⁰⁰ University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary’s Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, extract from Lady S[elkirk] to Lord S[elkirk], Montreal, 1816.

¹⁰¹ Archives of Ontario (AO) F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes,” extract from letter, J[ean]. S[elkirk]. to “Kate,” Montreal, March 27, 1816.

Settlement.” In 1820, George Simpson, travelling along the extended network of the Wedderburn family, and arrived in North America to act as Governor pro tem for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Simpson’s arrival in North America can be traced to two not-unrelated things. First, as already mentioned, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile’s intervention in the HBC as a hedge against possible losses in the sugar industry when slavery would become illegal, and second, the impending bankruptcy of the sugar brokerage firm he was working in, and in which Wedderburn Colvile was a partner. Simpson landed on North American soil bringing with him in his contextual baggage his years of experience in the culture of the West Indian sugar industry. Once he had arrived, despite his relative youth and lack of experience with the fur trade, he soon rose to the overseas governorship of the entire HBC. All of this happened at about the same time that the HBC and NWC, unable to sustain their violent enmity either politically or financially, amalgamated. It was also at this time that the Red River Settlement saw its first joint stock trading venture, supported by Wedderburn Douglas, the Buffalo Wool Company. While this venture would ultimately fail, its patriarchal and hierarchical structure, informed by Imperial ideas of the mutually constitutive race, class, and gender, are an important early example of the changes the Red River Settlement would see in the coming years. George Simpson’s own interventions in all of these areas have been well-studied over the past four decades, but, this chapter argues, these interventions can and should be read in the context of his experiences of the culture of West Indian sugar production and slavery, as well as the experiences of his supervisor and mentor Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, whose imbrications in plantation ownership and slavery were extensive and legendary. Simpson’s interventions, as evidenced by his constructions of Indigenous groups around the Red River Settlement as “ruined” if educated, and as both outside of civilization and dangerous to it, were not only sensible to Simpson, but they would also have been legible to his mentor.

The concluding chapter, “fortune, cunning, and Prudence”¹⁰² begins by considering some of the impacts of another event of colonial violence, the Jacobite Risings. The Jacobite Risings, and related violence, especially after the Battle of Culloden, set off waves of related violence throughout the British Empire as defeated families moved out through their own networks of

¹⁰² A.H. Millar, “The Wedderburn Book,” *The Scottish Review*, vol 34, Letter, Tuesday, Dec. 2, 1746, James Wedderburn to Miss Peggy Wedderburn at Nivay, 326.

relationships to other parts. A brief microhistory of the experiences of the extended Wedderburn family, begins in the violence of the execution of John Wedderburn of Blackness, a Jacobite sympathizer in 1746, which pushed several of his sons, including James Wedderburn (who later used the name Wedderburn Colvile, although this was not an official change), father of Andrew Wedderburn (later Colvile) and Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk, to Jamaica. In Jamaica the brothers James and John, joined by other family members, eventually became plantation owners. The post-Culloden diaspora also accounts for the immigration of a number of prominent and interconnected fur trade families to North America. The spider's webs of relationship that informed and supported fur trade families and their imperial movements, this chapter demonstrates, also offered the threads along which experiences of colonial violence could travel to North America.

Chapter One: “In the possession of the French and Canadians to who they belong:”¹ Slavery and the fur trade in the east

Just as slavery existed in New France, and later in Quebec, in the Canadas and in the Maritimes, slavery existed in the eastern fur trade. It existed as a part of, not separate from, colonial life in the region, and as part of, and not separate from, other forms of colonial violence, including erasure. It was connected to and influenced by the French and British empires, their cultures and their violence. And it intersected with networks of relationship in more than one way.

Gaps, lacunae, and language, challenges in documenting slavery in the fur trade in Northern North America

Documenting the extent and depth of slavery in the fur trade is a vexing task. Gaps in the record combine with slippery and ambiguous language around slavery and enslavement to challenge the researcher at every turn. In her essay “The colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession, and History in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*,” historian Adele Perry has argued that, in interrogating the colonial archive, “Putting the colonial archive on trial shows us how archives are not only about what they contain within their walls. They are also about absence, although the absences in the colonial archive are not neutral, voluntary, or strictly literal. They are... silences born of and perpetuated by violence and radical inequality.”² For researchers studying the history of slavery in northern North America, the truth of this observation cannot be overstated. Given the history and context of the written records that historians have access to, any fulsome and respectful exploration of the history of slavery in the fur trade necessarily requires that the researcher read these records in the context of their creation, while engaging with techniques including Ann Laura Stoler’s reading along the grain, and the ethnographic methodology of reading against the grain.

¹ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 76-77.

² Adele Perry, “The colonial Archive on Trial,” in *Archive Stories: Evidence, Experience, History* Antoinette Burton, ed. (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005), 345.

In the introduction to his book *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes*, Harvey Amani Whitfield identifies and discusses some of the issues that archival sources pose for researchers investigating slavery in North America, especially slavery in what would become Canada. Whitfield, in following up on work by scholars, including T.W. Smith and Robin Winks, notes that, in the records of the later eighteenth century that he had investigated as part of his study of Black history and the Maritimes in the context of loyalist slavery, the terms “servant” and “slave” were ambiguous at best. Records creators of the period, argues Whitfield perhaps hoping to avoid American claims to enslaved people as chattel, regularly described Black people as servants, while in fact, they were enslaved. But while Whitfield locates this practice in the period following the American Revolution, where questions of war reparations informed the decisions of records makers, he notes that the practice of calling enslaved individuals “servants” also reflected a more general and growing sensitivity to the moral issues slavery embodied.³ As the work of Brett Rushforth, which will be covered later, shows, it is almost certain that northern North American fur traders in this same period, many of whom came from the same communities and traditions as the records creators Whitfield discusses, engaged in the same sort of practices when describing, particularly, Blacks but quite possibly enslaved Indigenous people working for them in the fur trade.

Fur trade and slavery in New France

The fur trade in Montreal, with its connections to various other locations including Michilimackinac and Detroit, and with its intersections with various systems of slavery, reaches back into the French Regime.⁴ As many authors have demonstrated, slavery was a feature of society in New France. Strongly racialized, enslaved persons in New France came from two groups legally and socially constructed as being susceptible to enslavement. Broadly identified as “negre,” or “noir,” Black, and what came, early on, to be known as panis (panisse), or Indigenous slaves, historian Marcel Trudel estimated that about two thirds of enslaved people in

³ Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 10-12.

⁴ For instance, see: Sapoznik, “Where the historiography falls short,” 22-33; For a brief overview of this period, see: McGill University, “In Pursuit of Adventure, “The Partners and Partnerships,”” at <https://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/history/06.htm>. Accessed 10 December 2020.

New France came from the latter group.⁵ In New France, “panis” slaves could come in through a range of avenues, including those brought to the colony by Indigenous allies.⁶ But they also came in through the fur trade. It is no surprise, then, that connections between fur trading and slave trading, and particularly trading Indigenous slaves, was a part of the human and mercantile landscape of what would become eastern Canada from early in the history of fur trading in the region. Although beyond the scope of this research, it is clear that the intersections between fur trading and French colonial chattel slavery inevitably brought changes to Indigenous practices of captivity and slavery in ways that parallel the interventions and violences that Ned Blackhawk documents in *Violence over the Land*.⁷ Fur traders were not immune to this. “The establishment of Spanish, English and French colonies adversely enmeshed native peoples in European rivalries,” writes Allan Galloway. “Because the Europeans enjoyed limited military power away from their nascent colonies and their colonies were vulnerable to raids, they depended on indigenous peoples for both offensive and defensive operations.”⁸ These dependencies further enmeshed practices of slavery and slave exchanges in French diplomatic practices, adding to the already culturally, politically, and economically complex landscape.

If trading in Indigenous slaves could involve traders in risk, Indigenous slaves could also extend the reach of a trader’s webs of networks. Many of the traders who dealt in slaves, Robin Winks notes “dealt only in *panis* slaves.”⁹ There may have been a pragmatic element to this, as Afua Cooper writes, “During the French period, enslaved Panis were more numerous than enslaved Africans because Panis were easier to obtain,” but this may not have been the only reason they

⁵ Trudel and Tombs, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, 76. As Rushforth notes, Trudel’s numbers were gleaned from surviving records, and are therefore inevitably conservative. Brett Rushforth, “‘A Little Flesh We Offer You’: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60:4, 777-808, 380. Accessed December 11, 2020. doi:10.2307/3491699.

⁶ Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 211.

⁷ Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*.

⁸ Alan Galloway. *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2003), 99.

⁹ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 1997, 16.

were more numerous.¹⁰ With their knowledge of protocols and their own networks of relationships, as well as their place in alliance and relationship building, as Rushforth has demonstrated, Indigenous slaves may well have brought extra value through the many facets of relationship necessary for traders and their families to engage with Indigenous communities. On a list of slave owners who owned the largest numbers of enslaved persons in Marcel Trudel's *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires au Canada français*¹¹ many prominent fur trade names appear including Luc de La Corne, Paul-Joseph Le Moyne de Longueuil, Jacques Baby Dupéront, Joseph de Fleury de la Gorgendière, René Bourassa La Ronde, and Nicholas-Joseph de Noyelles.¹²

As the French pressed westward, so did these complex relationships and their implications. Karlee Sapoznik notes that, in addition to the economic motives for entering into the slave trade, Indigenous allies “offered captives from their western enemies to French merchants associated with the fur trade as culturally powerful symbols of their emerging partnership. For their part, the French “found that captive exchanges offered one of the most effective means of stabilizing

¹⁰ Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique*, 81.

¹¹ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, xxvii.

¹² Pierre Tousignant and Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant, “LA CORNE, LUC DE, known as Chaptés (Chap, Chapt) de La Corne or as La Corne Saint-Luc,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/la_corne_luc_de_4E.html; Andrew Rodger, “LE MOYNE DE LONGUEUIL; PAUL-JOSEPH, Chevalier de Longueuil,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020; http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le_moyne_de_longueuil_paul_joseph_4E.html; Dale Miquelon, “BABY, Dupéront, JACQUES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/baby_jacques_4E.html; Andrew Rodger, “FLEURY DE LA GORGENDIÈRE, JOSEPH DE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fleury_de_la_gorgendiere_joseph_de_3E.html; David A. Armour; “BOURASSA, La Ronde, RENÉ,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bourassa_rene_4E.html; S. Dale Standen, “NOYELLES DE FLEURIMONT, NICOLAS-JOSEPH DE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/noyelles_de_fleurimont_nicolas_joseph_de_3E.html.

the precarious alliances they forged with indigenous groups.” It is no surprise, then, that Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, often depicted as an early explorer in what would become Canada was also involved in slavery, both as a slave owner, and in slave trading during his expeditions west.¹³ As Rushforth notes, “Indian slavery had long been a part of La Vérendrye’s experience in New France.” La Vérendrye’s own family were slave traders and slave holders, and his business partner Ignace Gamelin was involved in the New France slave trade in the early 1700s. Karlee Sapoznik adds that “we can deduce based on his alliance with the Assiniboine – ‘ces grands rabatteurs d’esclaves’ – and his declaration about the number of slaves his enterprises procured to the colony, that he helped to fuel the slave trade.”¹⁴

The disruptions the interventions of traders, including La Vérendrye and his family introduced were neither benign nor neutral. Scott Berthelette argues that Indigenous groups west of the Great Lakes were able to use the alliances created through cultural forms that involved the exchange of slaves for or as gifts that were embedded in their own traditions of captivity and diplomacy to isolate the French from certain groups which they considered enemies. In 1741, for instance, an alliance of Cree, Monsoni, and Assiniboine struck against a number of Dakota villages, capturing, in the words of Governor Beauharnois, a “number of slaves so great that, according to the report and expression of the savages, they occupied in their march more than four arpents.... There will be more slaves than packages,” he mused. La Vérendrye’s involvement with Indigenous slave exchanges and trade for Dakota slaves had a range of consequences. Not least of these, notes Berthelette, was to define and police the boundaries of alliance, separating the French traders from the Dakota in the process. This, in turn, placed the French traders in danger of Dakota attack. At the same time, when the French did try to incorporate the Dakota in their trading relationships, apparently unaware of the responsibilities they had undertaken by entering into relationships with enemies of the Dakota, they destabilized their relationships with those groups. What may have seemed like commercial interventions to the French enmeshed them in a

¹³ Sapoznik, “Where the Historiography Falls Short,” see especially 28- 30.

¹⁴ Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 229; Sapoznik, “Where the Historiography Falls Short,” 28 ff.

local political landscape they did not comprehend, may have worsened local warfare and endangered French traders on the ground.¹⁵

Although a thorough and respectful exploration of Indigenous captivity across the fur trade is far beyond the scope of this research, La Vérendrye's experiences offer just one example of why it is impossible to discuss fur trade slavery without acknowledging the differences, even if often misrecognized, between Indigenous captivity and slavery and western ideas of chattel slavery. It is also impossible to ignore the complicated ways that these two systems intersected and interacted. Rushforth's recent works on the connections between alliance and captivity provide a welcome intervention in this field, as does William Henry Foster's *The Captors' Narrative: Catholic Women and Their Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier*, especially if read alongside works by Allan Galloway.¹⁶ Older work including James Axtell's "The White Indians of Colonial America"¹⁷ provide background on the complex and often imbricated relationships between networks of imperial and colonial violence, people, freedom, and unfreedom in colonial New England and New France. But despite these interventions, there remains room for much more study. Relationships between Indigenous and Black slaves, and especially how women as slave owners fit into this picture beg much more attention than they have received to date.

In his survey of slave owners, in total, over the two centuries following the arrival of the enslaved Oliver Le Jeune in New France (often cited as New France's first slave), who was brought there in 1629, Marcel Trudel has identified 35 eastern fur traders who owned 112 slaves, as well as 38 "voyageurs," or labourers, who owned 73 slaves. However, because many people involved in the fur trade were engaged in wide-ranging business ventures and may not have

¹⁵ Sapoznik, "Where the Historiography Falls Short," 26. For more on the political and diplomatic implications of the intersections of chattel and Indigenous slavery in this period inland. Scott Berthelette, "'Frères Et Enfants Du Même Père' The French Illusion of Empire West of the Great Lakes, 1731-1743." *Early American Studies* 14, no. 1 (2016): 174-98, 185 – 186, 196. Accessed January 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44630819>.

¹⁶ William Henry Foster, *The Captors' Narrative: Catholic Women and Their Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 32:1, 55-88.

always been clearly legible in the records as “fur traders,” and because the records themselves are often obscure and incomplete, these numbers are certainly low.¹⁸ Added to this, there are other factors that can mitigate against a fulsome understanding of slavery in the fur trade. Statistical accounts alone can often miss the depths of human experience. Reaching beyond statistics, taken at the human level, in some cases archival records and documents can provide a small glimpse of slavery in the fur trade in what would become Canada.

In her book *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land: Unfinished Conversations*, Jennifer S.H. Brown draws from the work of anthropologist Marilyn Strathern to use the principles found within fractal graphics to argue that, as with coastlines, “similar information is reproduced in different scales,” and coastal corrugations ‘present the same involute appearance from near or far.’¹⁹ In this vein, the story of fur traders Esther Sayward, and her husband Pierre Lestage, and of Sarah or Sally Aïnse, and how their lives intersected with slavery offers a fascinating look at how the complicated relationships involved in unfreedom could play out in the lives of individuals and communities in the eastern fur trade in northern North America. Esther Sayward Lestage, daughter of Puritan parents John Sayward and Mary Rishworth Sayward was born March 7, 1685, at York, Maine.²⁰ During her own lifetime Sayward Lestage would live both as a captive and as a slave owner, and would see five intercolonial wars, a stark reminder of the degree to which imperial and colonial violence impacted and altered the region during this period.²¹

Following Sayward Lestage’s father’s death in 1689, her mother Mary Rishworth Sayward remarried, probably more than once. By early 1692 she was the wife of James Plaisted and living

¹⁸ Trudel and Tombs, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, 107.

¹⁹ Marilyn Strathern quoted in Brown, *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land*, 105.

²⁰ Ester Sayword, in Maine Birth Records, 1715-1922, Maine State Archives; Cultural Building, 84 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0084, *Pre 1892 Delayed Returns*, Roll Number: 87. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 10 December 2020.

²¹ William Henry Foster, *The Captors' Narrative: Catholic Women and Their Puritan Men on the Early American Frontier* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 163. Charlotte Alice Baker devotes an entire section of her book to the story of the Saywards, see: *True Stories of New England Captives Carried to Canada During the Old French and Indian Wars*. (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1990), 69-88.

in York (now in the State of Maine).²² On the 24th of January 1692 a group of several hundred Abenaki, allies of the French in King William's War, the North American extension of the Nine Years War ravaging Europe, raided York in what would come to be called by the British the "Candlemas Massacre," or the Raid on York. Among the captives taken in this raid were Mary Rishworth Sayward Plaisted and her daughters, eleven-year-old Mary, and seven-year-old Esther. Cotton Mather, who wrote a version of the Sayward's story in a typically Jeremiadic fashion, includes the detail that Rishworth Sayward Plaisted was in child bed at the time of the raid and adds her infant son to the list of family members taken captive.²³ Mather adds that the boy was later brutally murdered by his captors, however, there is no documentation to support this claim and Mather's repetition of the story that an infant was taken with its mother and brutally murdered along the way in a very similar story about a relative of the Saywards draws these details into question.

Mary Rishworth Sayward Plaisted and her two daughters were baptized into the Catholic faith in Montreal on the eighth of December 1693, suggesting that they may have spent relatively little time with the Abenaki.²⁴ Rishworth Sayward Plaisted's Catholic baptismal record notes that at the time of her baptism she was working for the widow of Jean Batiste Migeon, who had been "first lieutenant-general of the bailiwick established by his Majesty in Villemarie." In her baptism into the Catholic faith, Mary was able to keep her name albeit in a French form,

²² Charles A. Sayward, *The Sayward Family. Being the History and Genealogy of Henry Sayward of York, Maine and His Descendants. With a Brief Account of Other Saywards Who Settled in America* (Ipswich, Mass: Independent Press, E.G. Hull, 1890), 32-35; Emma Lewis Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada between 1677 and 1760 During the French and Indian Wars* (Boston, Mass: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2012), 236.

²³ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana or the Ecclesiastical History of New England*, vol. II, Book VII, "Decennium Lucuossum, or a History of Remarkable Occurances, in the War which New-England had with Indian Salvages [sic], from the year 1688 to the year 1698," 54 ff. Available at Evans Early American Imprint Collection, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N00725.0001.001/1:4.2?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>. Accessed 10 December 2020.

²⁴ Baptismal record for Marie Madeleine Pleisted, baptized 8th December 1693, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textuelle), Montréal, Québec (Quebec), 1690-1696, f 172, Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection, Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 10 December 2020.

although “Madeleine” was added. Through their own baptisms, her daughter Mary became Marie Genevieve, and Esther became Marie Josephte, a significant change that would last her lifetime. In Montreal, both Sayward daughters lived with the sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame in Montreal.²⁵ Mary Rishworth Sayward Plaisted was redeemed as a prisoner of war and returned home to Maine in 1695,²⁶ but her daughters remained in Montreal, retaining a close relationship with the convent throughout their lives. Mary joined the Congrégation under the name sœur Marie-des-Anges, one of the Congrégation’s only two early Anglophone sisters,²⁷ and by 1701 was in charge of their Sault-au-Récollet mission,²⁸ possibly because she would

²⁵ Baptismal record for Marie Madeleine Pleisted, baptized 8th December 1693, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textuelle), Montréal, Québec (Quebec), 1690-1696, f 172; see also her name on the entries for her children’s baptisms: Baptismal records for Marie Joseph Lestage, 1 October 1712, Baptism: 1710-1713, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textual), and for Jacques Pierre Delestage, 25 August, 1714. Baptism: 1710-1713, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textual), Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection, Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

Foster writes that “As a young student, she had joined the *soeurs fermières* of the Congrégation at harvest time in 1696.” Foster, *The Captors' Narrative*, 163, 68. Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada between 1677 and 1760*, 236-237. Hélène Bernier, “SAYWARD, MARY, Marie des Anges,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sayward_mary_2E.html.

²⁶ Rishworth Sayward Plaisted was redeemed as a part of prisoner negotiations between the French and English. James Phinney Baxter, ed., *The Baxter manuscripts, edited by James Phinney Baxter. Published by the Maine Historical Society, aided by appropriations from the state, Portland, 1889-1916*, vol 5 (1897), 421 ff.

²⁷ Patricia Simpson, *Marguerite Bourgeoys et la Congrégation de Notre-Dame, 1665-1700* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 191.

²⁸ Colleen Gray, *The Congrégation De Notre-Dame, Superiors, and the Paradox of Power: 1693-1796* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2007); Hélène Bernier, « SAYWARD, MARY, Marie-des-Anges », dans *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*, vol. 2, Université Laval/University of Toronto, 2003–, consulté le 10 déc. 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/sayward_mary_2F.html. A cousin of the Saywards, Esther Wheelwright of Wells, who was captured by Abenaki in 1703, was superior of the Ursulines twice. Wheelwright’s story differs from that of her Sayward cousins in that she remained living with her Indigenous captors much longer. It was not until 1708, when a Jesuit acting on behalf of her family negotiated her release in exchange for a captive Indigenous boy who her father had sent from Boston that she was released by her captors. Following her release five years after her capture, she was taken to the Ursuline boarding school. Anne Little complicates the picture of captivity in the colonies even further with her examination of Wheelwright’s life by noting “It

have been linguistically and culturally suited to the work done there in educating and catechising young New England women captives.²⁹ Through their capture and captivity, the Sayward women, and especially the Sayward daughters had undergone profound changes in identity that impacted not only their own life trajectories and those of their family, but also the lives of many others they would come in contact with.

In 1710, Esther, now Marie Josephte Sayward, was granted naturalization in New France.³⁰ She appears to have remained, possibly as a lay teacher, with the sisters until her marriage to Pierre Lestage in 1712. The couple soon had two children.³¹ Born in France to a merchant family, as adults Pierre Lestage and his brother Jean had moved to Canada, where Pierre established himself firmly in the fur trade as a supplier, backer, and trader. Both brothers were involved in the creation of the Compagnie de la Colonie, which controlled the Canadian fur trade for the six years following its founding in 1700. Although he had other, diversified business interests, including purchasing the seigneurie of Berthier-en-Haut in 1718, Pierre Lestage remained in the fur trade until his death in 1743.³²

was Wabanaki women who initiated Esther in the beliefs and ritual practices of church, which were of course modified an experienced in their particular context in Wabinakia.” Ann M. Little, *The Many Captivities of Esther Wheelwright* (New Haven, Connecticut London, England Yale University Press, 2016), 49; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England* (New York, N.Y.: Knopf, 1982), 211; Gerald M. Kelly, “WHEELWRIGHT, ESTHER, de l’Enfant-Jésus,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/wheelwright_esther_4E.html.

²⁹ Foster, *The Captors' Narrative*, 69, 163.

³⁰ Baker, *True Stories of New England Captives*, 85.

³¹ Marriage record for Marie Joseph Sayeres and Pierre Lestages, Basilique Notre-Dame, 5 January, 1712, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textuelle), Montréal, Québec (Quebec), 1710-1713, f 96, Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Drouin Collection, Gabriel Drouin, comp. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 10 December 2020.

³² Dale Miquelon, “LESTAGE, PIERRE DE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lestage_pierre_de_3E.html.

Archival records show that the Sayward Lestage family/business owned a significant number of enslaved people. Trudel identifies baptismal and other records for slaves in the household beginning in September of 1712; on 21 September 1713 records from the Basilique Notre Dame show baptisms for five Indigenous slaves of Pierre Lestage: Ignace, Marguerite, Mathurine, Marguerite, and Marie Madeleine. Although Rushforth identifies these individuals as domestic servants,³³ read alongside works by fur trade historians including Brown and Van Kirk on the important roles Indigenous women in the fur trade could perform in terms of diplomacy and alliance, in facilitating and cementing relationships, and given Rushforth's work on the imbrications of slavery, diplomacy, alliance, and trade, the fact that the slave baptized in 1712 was identified as "Panis," and all five of the slaves baptized in September 1713 were identified as "Renard," or Muskwaki is significant. In total, of the thirteen enslaved people Trudel has identified as owned by the Lestage household, fully ten are Indigenous. Rushforth identifies the enslaved persons in the Lestage household as domestic servants, and Foster reasons that, because the sacramental records show the enslaved living in Montreal they were probably working in the Lestage home.³⁴ But given that the Lestage family lived in Montreal even after Lestage's purchase of the seigneurie of Berthier-en-Haut, it is more than possible that the notations merely located the enslaved persons with their owners; they could have contributed to the household, the business, or both, from this position.

Many of the surviving documents that identify enslaved individuals during the period surrounding the lifetime of Sayward Lestage are sacramental records. That the first record identifying an enslaved person with the Lestage household appears on 22 May, 1712, only a few months after Sayward Lestage's marriage to Pierre Lestage is significant, suggesting that it may have been Sayward Lestage who pressed for the conversion and baptism of the family's slaves. The predominance of Indigenous over Black slaves in these records, typical for the period, also begs consideration. Taken together, these facts point to many possible questions about the potential roles and relationships the slaves, and especially the Indigenous slaves, of the Lestage household may have had beyond work within the home, and whether their relationship with the

³³ Rushforth. *Bonds of Alliance*, 185.

³⁴ Foster, *The Captors' Narrative*, 165, Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 185.

family, albeit an unfree one, may have extended the Lestage networks of diplomacy, alliance, and trade so necessary to success in the fur trade. Given that family businesses could operate from the same location, and considering the importance of women in the creation and extension of fur trade relationships that has already been identified by earlier authors, it is not enough to simply assume that female slaves must necessarily have been employed only as domestic servants. In this context, then, it is also worth considering how their baptisms might have been experienced and understood. Finally, given that there seems to be no evidence that any Lestage slaves were baptized before Sayward Lestage joined the household, and in light of historian Anne Little's assertions that another Protestant captive (and Sayward cousin), Esther Wheelwright's first exposures to Catholicism would have been through her Indigenous captors, how can we also understand Sayward Lestage's part in the creation and maintenance of these networks of relationship?³⁵

Following Sayward Lestage's husband's death in December of 1743, Pierre Lestage's estate was split between his sister who had remained in France, and his wife.³⁶ With Sayward Lestage now overseeing her family's business interests in New France, she returned to the convent where she had lived in her youth, becoming a permanent retreatant in 1744 when she purchased an

³⁵ Baptism of Pierre Marie, baptism 22 May 1712, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textuelle), baptisms, 1705-1712; Baptisms of Ignace Sauvage, Marguerite Sauvage, Mathurine Sauvage, Marguerite Sauvage, and Marie Madeleine Sauvage, all baptized, 21 September 1713, Basilique Notre-Dame (copie textuelle), baptisms, 1710-1713, all accessed through: Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection, Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 56, 65, 68, 69, 71, 83, 87, 89, 116, 120, 75, 154, 186, 373; Rushforth *Bonds of Alliance*, 185. Foster frames Sayward Lestage as an active agent in the conversion of Indigenous people to Catholicism, but this may be just one layer of a much more complex world. Foster, *The Captors' Narrative* 165.

³⁶ Baker, *True Stories of New England Captives*, 87; Répertoire du patrimoine culturel du Québec, Numéro de pièce: P0058A500114, Document (Obligation de 290 livres par Jacques Lucier à la succession de Pierre de l'Estage en la personne de Marie Joseph Esther Suyer, veuve de l'Estage) Available at: <http://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=10929&type=pge> Accessed on 16 December 2020; Dale Miquelon, "LESTAGE, PIERRE DE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lestage_pierre_de_3E.html.

adjoining house and was allowed to cut a door between it and the convent proper to be able to move between the two buildings. From the convent she adopted two girls and visited them during recreation times. Both of the girls eventually became sisters themselves.³⁷ The Lesatge family's slaves must have been a part of Sayward Lestage's inheritance, and at least some of them remained with her. One of them, a Black man identified as Valentin, was documented in 1741 as the slave of Pierre Lestage, but by 1747 was identified as Sayward Lestage's slave. As a widow, Sayward Lestage was a businesswoman in her own right. In 1746, she and Lestage's nephew Pierre-Noel Courthiau had entered into a business partnership, which was dissolved in 1750.³⁸ Surviving records indicate that, during her widowhood, Sayward Lestage continued to own slaves, Marie-Joseph, panise was baptized in 1744, Pierre-Ignace, "nègre" was baptized in 1748, and Louise Lestage, panise was confirmed in 1767, as was Marguerite, panise, "appartenant à la veuve."³⁹

Historical analysis, challenged by gaps in documentation and certain, often gendered, assumptions, has led some historians to identify slaves owned by women as domestic servants, however, this was not always the case. In 1754, notarial records show that "Ledit valentin neigre de ladite demoiselle veufve Lestage," a trained blacksmith, boilermaker, and gunsmith, was granted permission to travel and work for S^r Moniere by Sayward Lestage, in exchange for which he would be fed and clothed, and would be paid a certain amount.⁴⁰ Valentin's contract here foregrounds both how complicated freedom and unfreedom could be, and also the fact that

³⁷ Gray, *The Congrégation De Notre-Dame*, 44-45; Baker, *True Stories of New England Captives*, 87.

³⁸ Dale Miquelon, "LESTAGE, PIERRE DE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lestage_pierre_de_3E.html.

³⁹ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 373; Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ), Procès contre Valentin, nègre, esclave de la veuve de Pierre de Lestage, accusé du meurtre accidentel de Jean-Baptiste, orphelin, apprenti forgeron et serrurier, 11 avril 1746 - 13 avril 1746. Available at <https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/3383054?docsearchtext=valentin%20esclave>. Accessed 10 December 2020.

⁴⁰ BAnQ, 06m_cn601s202_175400329_engagement_lestage-4, Engagement de Valentin, Neigre de Mad^{elle} Lestage, au S^r Moniere pour hyverner, deux hyvers aux Illinois, 1754 Le 29^e de mars.

the enslaved persons in Sayward Lestage's household were not all only domestic servants. Valentin's considerable skills set would have been far more useful to the family's business than to hearth and home, especially once Sayward Lestage moved into the residence attached to the convent, and Valentin's deployment into the fur trade world in 1754 suggests that he was probably already familiar with that environment. That Valentin worked for Sayward Lestage in the fur trade begs the question as to whether some of her Indigenous slaves might have done so as well. Considered alongside Rushworth and previous work in the field about fur trade wives and their work in the creation and maintenance of family relationships, it is interesting to consider whether some of Sayward Lestage's Indigenous slaves might have promoted her business success through kinship bonds and diplomacy, and how the family's slaves may generally have contributed to the economic and social success of the family.

Esther Marie Josephite Sayward Lestage was not the only female entrepreneur in the fur trade, nor was she the only woman to own slaves. The successful fur trader Sarah or Sally Ainse owned, bought, and sold enslaved persons. Her story invites similar questions to those raised by Sayward Lestage's life. Is it accurate to assume that slaves, particularly those owned by women, only performed domestic tasks unless proven otherwise? Or might they have functioned in ways that extended relationships or otherwise promoted the business success of the individual or family? Ainse was probably an Oneida woman who had married the fur trader and interpreter Andrew Montour when she was about 17. With the dissolution of her marriage, Ainse returned to her relations with her young son Nicholas, around 1755 or 1756. By 1759, she was trading in her own right. In the 1770s, Ainse moved to the Detroit region, where she operated a successful trading business. As Tiya Miles states, at Detroit, "she found ample opportunity to establish her own networks for trade. Since Ainse had a previous business relationship with John Askin from a period when they both lived in Michilimackinac, and since she had extensive kinship ties through her former husband in the area, Detroit was a fitting place for the reestablishment of her female-run trading venture." Detroit censuses show that Ainse owned enslaved people,⁴¹ and

⁴¹ The 1779 Michigan census shows she had one male and two female slaves. The 1782 census shows she had one female slave. Neither census gives any more information about Ainse's slaves, *Michigan Historical Collections*, vol. 10, (Michigan Historical Commission, Michigan State Historical Society, 1888), 316, 609.

Miles notes that an entry in one of Askin's account books for 1781 showed she had received "1 smoaked skin from Thebeau for a boy at Mackina."⁴²

Susan Sleeper-Smith writes that when John Askin moved his centre of business to the Great Lakes region in the 1760s, he "purchased a female Indian slave who had ties to a prominent Michilimackinac fur trade family, the Bourassas. Manette (Monette) became the mother of two of his children," children "he later incorporated ... into his familiar kin network....When he moved to Michilimackinac in the mid-1760s, he hired Sally Ainse, an Oneida woman trading at Detroit."⁴³ Yet despite such a clear indication that enslaved people, including enslaved women, could be and were valuable connections who could enhance not only a fur trader's prestige, but also his networks with and through Indigenous people, historians have treated Ainse's ownership of slaves as a sign of her economic success without questioning the ways in which they may have been a part of creating and maintaining that success. Much as is the case with Sayward Lestage and other slave owning women, whether fur traders in their own right or in partnership with men, the way that slave ownership may have advanced and extended kin and business relationships remains to be fully explored. Research into the gendered world of slave ownership in the fur trade shows every sign of conforming to what Stoler describes as "both a corpus of writing and as a force field that animates political energies and expertise, that pulls on some 'social facts' and converts them into qualified knowledge, that attends to some ways of knowing while repelling and refusing others." But, as Stoler notes, also "registers other reverberations,

⁴² Tiya Miles, *Dawn of Detroit*, 108.

⁴³ John Clarke, "AINSE, SARAH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ainse_sarah_6E.html; Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2018), 151-152. See also F. C. Hamil, "Sally Ainse, fur trader," *Algonquin Club, Hist. Bull.* (Detroit), no.3 (1939); Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit*, 62.

crosscurrent frictions, attractions, and aversions that worked within and against those assertions of imperial rights to property, persons, and profits that colonial regimes claimed as their own.”⁴⁴

Fur trade and slavery in the east after 1760

Following the establishment of British control in Quebec, European wars and politics, this time the Seven Years War, once again impacted North American lives, albeit in sometimes subtle ways. As Charmaine Nelson notes, “when the British seized New France.... They took control of a white francophone population who had been slaving since the seventeenth century.” In terms of the practice of slavery in the colony, the British adopted a path that did little to change the existing structures in Quebec. Quoting Philip Gerard, Nelson writes that the 1760 Articles of Capitulation signed in Montreal provided that “all ‘negroes and panis’ should remain ‘in the possession of the French and Canadians to who they belong.’”⁴⁵ What did change, however, was that, following the Capitulation, British settlers added a new layer to the picture of slavery. Summarizing work by Trudel, Robin Winks notes that records reveal that “French settlers preferred *panis* but English settlers chose, and after 1759, brought in, substantial numbers of Negroes.”⁴⁶ Although issues with records gaps make it difficult to quantify numbers, as Mackey shows, Loyalists migrating north brought with them a substantial number of Black slaves, while others arrived as booty or in hopes of finding freedom for themselves.⁴⁷ Following 1763, the fur trade was in some ways unchanged, as the British chose to devolve the regulatory machinery of fur trade licensing that had been the responsibility of the Crown under the French Regime to the British province of Quebec, and the Quebec fur trade continued to operate under a loose web of business partnerships and associations.⁴⁸ What did change, however, was who sat at the top of these fur trade operations. Under British control, the upper ranks were now occupied largely by British (often Scottish) businessmen. These partnerships began to coalesce in the later 1700s, and

⁴⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Thinking Through Colonial Ontologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 22.

⁴⁵ Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire*, 76-77.

⁴⁶ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 9-10.

⁴⁷ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, see especially documents reproduced at 386 ff.

⁴⁸ Barry M. Gough, *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1997), 44.

by the 1780s, the North West Company was emerging as a player in a rapidly and aggressively expanding western fur trade.⁴⁹

Entanglements and imbrications between the fur trade and chattel slavery occurred in a wide range of ways. Some fur traders engaged in slavery through their businesses, some as individual slave owners. Some purchased enslaved people to work for them, while others purchased slaves whom they then soon sold on. Some fur trading enterprises were part of larger and diverse business interests, while others focused solely on the fur trade itself. The fur trading company of Phyn and Ellice had connections not only to the North American fur trade, their family/business was also involved directly in slavery. Operating out of New York in the 1760's, the Company ordered a young Black male and two Black female slaves from their contact in the slave trade. In 1769, Phyn and Ellice were acting as brokers for James Sterling of Detroit, who wanted to buy a Black boy and two Black girls, and in 1770 the Company received and quickly sold on all but one of nine Black boys they had purchased from Hayman Levy in New York. In a letter dated 13 August 1770 to "Mr. Levy," the Company wrote that "We have received two negro boys: the oldest will do for Mr. Stirling at Detroit and is entered to our order books. But we are entirely at a loss what to do with that fat-gutted boy, having orders for none such from any of our correspondents, and we don't by any means want him for ourselves," while in an undated letter they wrote to "Mr John Porteous, Detroit" that "We have contracted with a New England gentleman for some green negroes to be delivered here the first of August, and then your wench will be forwarded, together with a negro boy, in case she may some time hereafter choose a husband. We apprehend he will be useful to you, or advantageous about the sloop, or you can dispose of him as you find best. The price is fifty pounds each." In addition to their direct involvement in brokering sales, the Company also facilitated the transfer of money between purchasers and sellers. In 1774, Phyn and Ellice relocated operations to London and to their Montreal subsidiary office, Forsyth, Richardson, and Company, both partners being relations of Phyn. The extended Phyn and Ellice family and related companies, along with their connections

⁴⁹ Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 18; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, xi; W. Stewart Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), 8.

to West Indian plantation slavery will be discussed later, however the Forsyths had their own family connections with West Indian plantation slavery, the Reverend Morris Forsyth, who was directly involved in West Indian plantation slavery was a brother of James Forsyth.⁵⁰

The Company of [James] Finlay and [John] Gregory may have owned an enslaved person, a Black man named Jack, whose name appeared in a runaway slave advertisement in the Quebec Gazette on the 21st of May 1778. In the advertisement, Finlay and Gregory is listed as the Company that would pay out a reward for the return of the man. While whether “Jack” was property of the Company or one of the partners, or whether they were agents facilitating his return is not clear, the Company’s involvement in his enslavement is.⁵¹ Gregory is also listed as

⁵⁰ Silas Farmer, *The history of Detroit and Michigan; or, The metropolis illustrated: a chronological cyclopædia of the past and present, including a full record of territorial days in Michigan, and the annals of Wayne County* 2nd ed, (Detroit: S. Farmer & Co., 1889), 344 (see other examples of correspondence here as well); Edward J. Littlejohn, "SLAVES, LAWS, AND COURTS IN EARLY DETROIT AND MICHIGAN 1701-1835." *Journal of Law in Society*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2018, p. 18+. *Gale OneFile: LegalTrac*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A533005292/LT?u=univmanitoba&sid=LT&xid=ee2cac00>. Accessed 14 Dec. 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “Rt. Hon. Edward Ellice,” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/27776>. Accessed 16 December 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “James Phyn,” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146660833>. Accessed 11 December 2020; see also Krista Barclay, “‘Far asunder there are those to whom my name is music’: Nineteenth-century Hudson’s Bay Company families in the British imperial world,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Manitoba, Department of History, 2019, 34; Walter S. Dunn, *Opening New Markets: The British Army and the Old Northwest* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 50-51; Walter Scott Dunn, *The New Imperial Economy: The British Army and the American Frontier, 1764-1768* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2001), 42; James M. Colthart, “ELLICE, ALEXANDER,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice_alexander_5E.html; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 38-39; Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, “FORSYTH, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/forsyth_john_7E.html; <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/26740>. Walter Scott Dunn also notes the Phyn and Ellice ordering slaves through the British merchants William and Norman Durward. Dunn, *Opening New Markets*, 51.

⁵¹ Reproduced in Mackie, *Done with Slavery*, 320; Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, “GREGORY, JOHN (d. 1817),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gregory_john_1817_5E.html. Finlay was not a stranger to slavery, as will be seen later in this chapter, and John Gregory acted as an intermediary in the

purchasing a woman named Betty, who had been the property of “Capt. Collins.” As the chattel of her master, who had taken the American side in the Revolutionary War, Betty was listed as “Rebel” property.⁵² Frank Mackey also notes that Gregory had a servant or slave named Othello Keeling.⁵³ The North West Company itself purchased Antoine Senart (or Smart), a Black man probably born about 1769 or 1770, from Charles Lusignan on 4 May 1798 in Montreal. The sale was brokered by John Gregory.⁵⁴

Other eastern fur traders were involved in slavery as well, as a brief survey of the founding members of Montreal’s famous Beaver Club demonstrates. Founded in 1785, the Beaver Club, often lionized in early fur trade histories, was, as Carolyn Podruchny writes, “an elite dining club restricted to men who had wintered in the North American interior, often referred to as ‘Indian Country.’” A homosocial club of men with connections to the fur trade emanating out of the east, every member had to be voted into the club by its membership. The club offered a place for these men to bond through ritual, recital, and performance related to past deeds of derring-do in their fur trading exploits, as well as a place where newer members of the fur trade could be enfolded and contained in a network of the Montreal elite. Connections between the Beaver Club and Sir John Johnson’s Montreal freemasonry further enhanced and extended the networks that the

North West Company’s purchase of Antoine Senart or Smart. Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 119.

⁵² Library and Archives Canada, Haldimand Papers, B-103, [1784], Montreal, “Return of negroes and Negro wenches brought into the Province by parties under the direction of Sir John Johnson,” f 482. Available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1447/1032?r=0&s=4. Accessed on 10 December 2020.

⁵³ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 152.

⁵⁴ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 54; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 119, 305. Trudel confuses the North West Company and Hudson’s Bay Company in his entries, however, as a partner in McTavish, Frobisher & Co., the Montreal business representatives of the NWC, at the time, it is very unlikely Gregory would have been working for the HBC. Louis Chaboillez’s notarial index shows the sale as being to the NWC. “2919. Vente d’un Negre esclave ... a la Compagnie de Nordouest.” BANQ, Montréal, Quebec, Canada; Collection: *Fonds Cour Supérieure. District judiciaire de Montréal. Cote CN601. Greffes de notaires, 1648-1967.*; District: *Montréal*; Title: *Chaboillez, Louis (1787-1801)* Accessed through Ancestry.ca. Accessed on 16 December 2020.

Beaver Club offered its membership. As Podruchny argues, like many other fraternal societies and organizations of the period, the Beaver Club offered the space in which its members could create and maintain connections, and “construct and cement a common culture of shared values and social ideals. One of the most important of these ideals was the respectable man.”⁵⁵

But the Beaver Club also embodied an identity that drew on ideas of masculinity that engaged with the constructed wildness and savagery of the fur trade as operating beyond the reaches of “civilization,” and the assumed power, strength, and boldness of its members who had braved such rigours. True, as bourgeois, these men had not actually shared in the physical labour and hardships that their subordinates experienced regularly, nor had they truly lived like Indigenous people, but in their dinners at the Beaver Club they constructed for themselves these identities through club rituals and storytelling. As a reminder and symbol of the club’s reification of a masculinity forged in the crucible of wilderness, each member of the Beaver Club received a medal which indicated on its reverse the year that that trader had first wintered in the pays d’en haut. Although Lawrence Burpee described the formation of the Beaver Club as growing “naturally out of the coalition of Montreal merchants engaged in the western fur trade,” in fact the club reflected deliberate decisions and constructions of networks and narratives. In some ways, writes Podruchny, “the divergent ideals of respectability and rowdiness reflected a transition from an earlier fur trade society dominated by rough and ready traders whose claims to status and power came solely from their success in the trade, to a later society dominated by a professional, mostly English and Anglican, elite, who brought urban middle-class ideals to their management of the fur trade.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Carolyn Podruchny, "Festivities, Fortitude, and Fraternalism: Fur Trade Masculinity and the Beaver Club, 1785-1827." In *New Faces in the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference*, William C. Wicken, Jo-Anne Fiske and Susan Sleeper-Smith, eds. (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1998), n.p. Chapter available at 1998.https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10315/36822/Podruchny_Festivities.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y Accessed 11 December 2020.

⁵⁶ Podruchny, "Festivities, Fortitude, and Fraternalism," n.p.; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 44; L.J. Burpee, (1924). *The Beaver Club. Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 3 (1), 73–92, 73, <https://doi.org/10.7202/300038ar>.

Trudel has argued that merchants trading in the pays d'en haut were in a particularly good position to have access to enslaved people, as they were able to purchase them at better prices inland and had easy contact with American slave traders.⁵⁷ As already mentioned, fur traders may also have had other reasons to want to be involved in the buying and selling of slaves, especially Indigenous slaves, as these slaves could support their trading success through facilitating ceremony and alliances. It is no surprise, then, that slave ownership among eastern fur traders continued after the British took control of Quebec. The Beaver Club began, in 1785, with nineteen original members. Of this group, four had travelled into the pays d'en haut before British control of Quebec, Charles Chaboillez, Maurice Blondeau, Hypolite Des Rivières, and Etienne Campion, while the remaining members all travelled inland after 1759.⁵⁸ All of the traders who had travelled inland before 1759, as well as their families, were involved in slavery, as were many of the remaining original members.

Trudel identifies the Chaboillez family as being among the leading slave-owning merchant families in Quebec. Charles Chaboillez, whose Beaver Club membership shows he first wintered in the pays d'en haut in 1751, had at least eight slaves, four Black, and four Indigenous.⁵⁹ Giving testimony in 1846 in the trial *Pierre, a Man of Color vs Gabriel Chouteau*, Chaboillez's daughter Adélaïde Chaboillez Bouchette stated that "I have a distinct recollection that during my Youth up to the Year 1795 or 6 there were several Slaves owned by my Mother, who resided in Montreal in this Province," adding that she thought her mother had emancipated some of her slaves, but that "at the period of which I am speaking several families held and owned slaves in Montreal -- I have no doubt that my mother considered these slaves of which I have spoken by name, as her property, and that at that time the holding & having slaves in Montreal was never objected to or considered illegal but seemed on the contrary to be perfectly sanctioned by the

⁵⁷ Trudel and Tombs, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, 106.

⁵⁸ In this list the name "Campeau" is in error and should be Campion. Harry Duckworth, personal communication, 10 February 2020. Podruchny, "Festivities, Fortitude, and Fraternalism," n.p.; Burpee, "The Beaver Club," 73-74.

⁵⁹ Trudel and Tombs, *Canada's Forgotten Slaves*, 106; Gratien Allaire, "CHABOILLEZ, CHARLES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/chaboillez_charles_5E.html.

usage of the Country, as far as I could see.” Charles Chaboillez also purchased a “mullato” slave, sixteen-year-old Pierre, from his hairdresser in 1793. In this transaction, Joseph Frobisher, who will be mentioned later, acted as proxy for Chaboillez.⁶⁰

The Indigenous woman Charlotte was enslaved by fur trader Maurice Régis Blondeau.⁶¹ Rushforth notes that Maurice Blondeau’s great uncle also Maurice Blondeau was “one of the earliest to trade Indian slaves in New France.” The elder Maurice Blondeau introduced his nephews to the trade, one of whom was Jean-Baptiste Blondeau, Maurice Blondeau’s father.⁶² Similarly, many of the Trottier dit Desrivières family were involved in slavery. Trudel has identified four slaves owned by Hippolyte Trottier dit Desrivières, all Indigenous.⁶³ Étienne Campion owned a Black slave named Rose, who gave birth to a daughter Julie, as well as the Panise women Marie-Louise and Angele. It is possible that this Rose’s life took centre stage in the trial mentioned earlier in which Adélaïde Chaboillez testified. In the suit, the children of Rose claimed that they were, in fact, free, because their mother had been born in Montreal in 1768, and therefore were born where slavery was not recognized. However, Mackie cautions that this may not have been the same Rose.⁶⁴ Gabriel Côté, who had wintered in the pays d’en haut in

⁶⁰ See scanned original documents and transcripts of this trial at <http://repository.wustl.edu/concern/texts/bn9997811>. Accessed 11 December 2020. The original document is part of the Missouri State Archives St Louis Circuit Court collection. See Mackie, *Done with Slavery*, 17 ff for a discussion of the trial that this testimony was part of.

⁶¹ François Béland, “BLONDEAU, MAURICE-RÉGIS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 1, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/blondeau_maurice_regis_5E.html; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 283; Mackie, *Done with Slavery*, 423.

⁶² Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 295, Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 283.

⁶³ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 423.

⁶⁴ Mackie, *Done with Slavery*, 17ff, 295, 422; collaboration, “CAMPION, ÉTIENNE (baptized Étienne-Charle),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 1, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/campion_etienne_charles_4E.html.

1760 owned Anne, an Indigenous slave, who died in 1809 at the age of 60 in Detroit.⁶⁵

Alexander Henry the Elder resided with a Black woman, Phillis Murray, probably enslaved, who was baptized in 1797 at the age of 42. In 1778, Henry petitioned Governor Haldimand for permission to sell a runaway enslaved man whom he had captured in 1771 and had imprisoned, and now wanted to sell as compensation for debts owed him by the slave's master.⁶⁶ The brothers Benjamin, Joseph, and Thomas Frobisher first wintered in the fur country in 1765, 1768, and 1773 respectively. In 1767, Benjamin Frobisher entered into partnership with Richard Dobie, travelling that year to the pays d'en haut, and wintering there while Dobie remained in Montreal. Trudel identifies 2 enslaved people owned by Dobie personally, both Indigenous.⁶⁷

The company of Dobie & Frobisher was involved in the slave trade. In 1769, the company appeared in a runaway slave advertisement for a Black woman names Susannah, who was described as being about twenty-seven. As with other runaway advertisements, the company's exact involvement in Susannah's life is ambiguous, they may have been acting as agents for another person in locating the woman or may have been her owners trying to recover her for themselves.⁶⁸ In either capacity, the company was attempting to profit from the enslavement of human beings.

That same year Dobie & Frobisher was engaged in a string of correspondence with other traders as they attempted to recover a debt by redeeming an enslaved person. First, fur trader Isaac Todd

⁶⁵ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 306; Ruth R. Jarvis, "COTTÉ, GABRIEL," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 1, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cotte_gabriel_4E.html.

⁶⁶ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 345; Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 436, 533; LAC MG21-Add.MSS.-21877, Haldemant Papers, Memorials from Civilians, 1777-1785, Library and Archives Canada copy of Henry's petition to Haldemant available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h1744/76?r=0&s=1. Accessed 11 December 2020.

⁶⁷ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 319.

⁶⁸ Advertisement appearing in the *Quebec Gazette*, 18 October 1769. Slave advertisement reproduced in Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 317, see also Mackey's note 22 on page 532 where he points out that it would have been odd for the advertisement to appear in Quebec and not Montreal if she had been their own slave.

wrote to Dobie & Frobisher that, since Thomas Finchley was indebted to them, they should pay themselves the owed amount from the proceeds of selling “a panis slave named Charlotte which we have Sent to your address under the Care of Mr. Dowe.” The rest, Todd told the firm, could be used to pay for corn and flour the Company was to provide the next spring. On 17 June 1769, Dobie & Frobisher wrote to the firm of Rankin & Edgar that the previous fall they had sent a panis Slave to Thomas Finchley’s address. Finchley, they noted, had informed them he had sold this slave to Rankin & Edgar for corn and flour, which “begins to be Scarce here, and... we shall [soon] be in great need of it.”⁶⁹ These transactions, along with Alexander Henry’s seizure of a runaway slave for payment of debt show how deeply embedded the idea of slaves as a commodity was in the commerce of the fur trade. Joseph Frobisher became part of the Dobie & Frobisher firm at an early date, associating him with their business activities. He had other family connections with slavery as well, his wife was the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Jobert, a surgeon, and another of the founding members of the Beaver Club who owned slaves. Her aunt was married to Charles Chaboillez, who as we have already seen, owned slaves in her own right. As well, as noted above, Joseph Frobisher acted as proxy in the purchase of a slave by Charles Chaboillez.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Trudel lists three slaves associated with Richard Dobie, Sussanah who, as discussed above, may not have been enslaved to him directly, and two Indigenous slaves. He lists two slaves associated with Jean-Baptiste Jobert, both Indigenous, Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 319, 351. Fernand Ouellet, “FROBISHER, BENJAMIN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/frobisher_benjamin_4E.html; Fernand Ouellet, “FROBISHER, JOSEPH,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/frobisher_joseph_5E.html; Joanne Burgess, “DOBIE, RICHARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dobie_richard_5E.html; Elizabeth Demers, “John Askin and Indian slavery at Michilimackinac,” in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, Allan Gallay, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 391–416, 408.

⁷⁰ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 351; Fernand Ouellet, “FROBISHER, BENJAMIN JOSEPH,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/frobisher_benjamin_joseph_6E.html; Fernand Ouellet, “FROBISHER, JOSEPH,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020,

In his *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, Trudel lists six enslaved people who were owned by James McGill, however McGill's involvement in slavery extended beyond that. In 1784, McGill acted as agent to the distiller Thomas Corry in the sale of two enslaved Black people to Levy Solomons. In 1787, he sold four enslaved Indigenous people to Jacques Lefrenier on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs which had promised to replace any enslaved soldiers who were killed while fighting for the British. In 1787, Sir John Johnston paid the firm of Todd & McGill for incidental expenses that had arisen from the purchase of blankets, flour, corn, wild rice, tobacco, vermilion, and four slaves. In an addendum, Patrick Langan, then Acting Secretary for Indian Affairs explained that "The four Slaves charged in the foregoing account, were purchased by order of the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs in order to fulfill a promise made by Governor St. Clair to the Indians and confirmed by Capt. Robertson, to replace some of their people killed in action during the late war." Through his marriage, McGill also became connected to the slave-owning Des Rivieres family.⁷¹

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/frobisher_joseph_5E.html; Gratien Allaire, "CHABOILLEZ, CHARLES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020,

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/chaboillez_charles_5E.html; Fernand Ouellet, "FROBISHER, JOSEPH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/frobisher_joseph_5E.html.

⁷¹ Quoted in "The Early Life of James McGill," in *The McGill Daily Vol. 19 No. 003: October 2, 1929*, McGill University, Daily Publications Society, 2 October, 1929, 2, available at <https://archive.org/details/McGillLibrary-mcgill-daily-v19-n003-october-02-1929-7755/page/n1/mode/2up?q=slaves>. Accessed 11 December 2020. The article continues on page four, where it highlights a contract McGill signed purchasing a woman, Sarah. Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 377; J. I. Cooper, "McGILL, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgill_james_5E.html; McGill University: "1813: James McGill Dies, Leaving Funds for the Establishment of a College in His Name," available at: <https://ua.ssmu.ca/2016/08/31/james-mcgill-dies-leaving-funds-for-the-establishment-of-a-college-in-his-name/>. Accessed 11 December 2020; Stanley B. Frost, "DESRIVIÈRES, FRANÇOIS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/desrivieres_francois_6E.html. In *Black Racialization and Resistance at an Elite University*, Rosalind Hampton notes that the slaves purchased to replace those lost in battle were in fact Black slaves, intended to replace those lost by their Indigenous masters. Rosalind Hampton, *Black Racialization and Resistance at an Elite University* (University of Toronto Press, 2020), 39.

In 1797, Louis-Joseph Ainsse sold a slave to John Dease. The sale would eventually trigger a lawsuit, as the slave, Frank, claimed that he was free, and that Ainsse had had no right to sell him. Ainsse repeatedly promised to provide proper documentation, while Frank refused to remain with Dease. Finally, in 1799, Dease turned to the courts for some resolution to the situation. Ainsse could not remember if he had purchased Frank and a woman named Sally in 1788 or 1789, while the documentary proof of the transaction available to the courts, even in these early times, was scarce. It is possible that this is the transaction that Elizabeth Sherburn Demers has documented in her dissertation ““Keeping a store: the social and commercial worlds of John Askin in the eighteenth-century Great Lakes, 1763-1796”and which, she notes, involved “Nine different people...in the sale of the man and the woman.” Demers identifies “the two slaves themselves; Maisonville, who apparently owned them; Macomb, who sent them to Michilimackinac for sale; Morrison, who brokered the sale; Ainsse, who purchased them for apparently half of what Macomb hoped to get,” and then “Madame Cere from Illinois, who was to take the slaves if no buyers could be found; the elusive WJB, and Laframboise, the traders whose promissory notes guaranteed the funds for the sale itself.”⁷²

On 8 September 1769, in a letter from Michilimackinac to Rinkan & Edgar, Isaac Todd, business partner of James McGill, complained about “6 Slaves [McBeath] Bo^l from Finley the[y] were such starved miserable looking Creatures I w^d have nothing to say to them.”⁷³ “Finley,” that is, James Finlay, one of the founding members of the Beaver Club, and his business partner John Gregory were both involved in slavery. In his biography of Finlay, Harry Duckworth notes that

⁷² Elizabeth Sherburn Demers, “Keeping a Store: The Social and Commercial Worlds of John Askin in the Eighteenth-century Great Lakes, 1763-1796,” Ph. D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, Department of History, 2010, 177. Available at <https://d.lib.msu.edu/etd/17448/datastream/OBJ/View/>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 60-62, 437; David A. Armour, “AINSSE (Ainse, Hains, Hins), JOSEPH-LOUIS (Louis-Joseph),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ainsse_joseph_louis_5E.html.

⁷³ Harry Duckworth, unpublished biography, “Finlay, James.” In the possession of the author. With thanks to the author for this and his generous advice that has been invaluable to researching and organizing this and other chapters; Fernand Ouellet, “McBEATH, GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcbeath_george_5E.html.

James Finlay first appears in Canada in the spring of 1762, when ‘Elizabeth, a negro slave belonging to Mr. James Finley’ was baptized [undated entry between Apr 5 & May 3, 1762].” Trudel adds the names of two Black women to the list of slaves owned by Finlay, Phoebe and Peg. Mackey adds the detail that Finlay had purchased “Peggy Finlay” from Elias Smith in 1783 and had sold her to Patrick Langan in 1788. Finlay and Gregory appear as the owners of “Jack, a black man,” in an escaped slave advertisement in 1778.⁷⁴ When he died in 1788, John McNamara left in his will all of his household goods, including his “Slaves in and about my House at Berthier” to his wife Mary McFarlane Faries McNamara, who had previously been married to the fur trader Hugh Faries, who will be discussed a little later. Mackey notes that McNamara had purchased two enslaved people, “Prince,” and “Mimy,” from Ethan Allen’s brother Levi Allen.⁷⁵

The remaining founding members of the Beaver Club may also have had some direct involvement with the fur trade slave trade or with slave ownership, but to date no evidence has been found for this. Many, however, had at least some indirect connections. Thomas Frobisher had two brothers connected with slavery. John McGill, brother of James, had connections through his own family’s involvement in slavery as well as that of his business partner Charles Paterson. Trudel lists three slaves owned by Paterson, one of these was reputed to be his own son, whom he sold to the Ottawas. John Askin, a fur trader deeply involved in slavery himself, and who had several children by one of his own slaves, wrote to Paterson “there is a Boy here who was sold to the Ottawa, that every body but yourself says is yours, he suffered much [,] poor child [,] with them. I have at length been able to get him from them on promise of giving an Indian Woman Slave in his Stead – he’s at your service if you want him, if not I shall take good care of him until he is able to earn his Bread without Assistance.”⁷⁶ But even disregarding these more indirect relationships with slavery, in total, research to date indicates that, of the nineteen

⁷⁴ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 320, 435; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 327; Trudel and Tombs, *Canada’s Forgotten Slaves*, 130, Duckworth, “Finlay, James.”

⁷⁵ Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 457-458.

⁷⁶ Miles, *Dawn of Detroit*; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 394.

founding members of the Beaver Club, fourteen had direct involvement with slavery and the slave trade. Figure 2 is a relationship network map showing identified connections between the Beaver Club's original members and slavery.

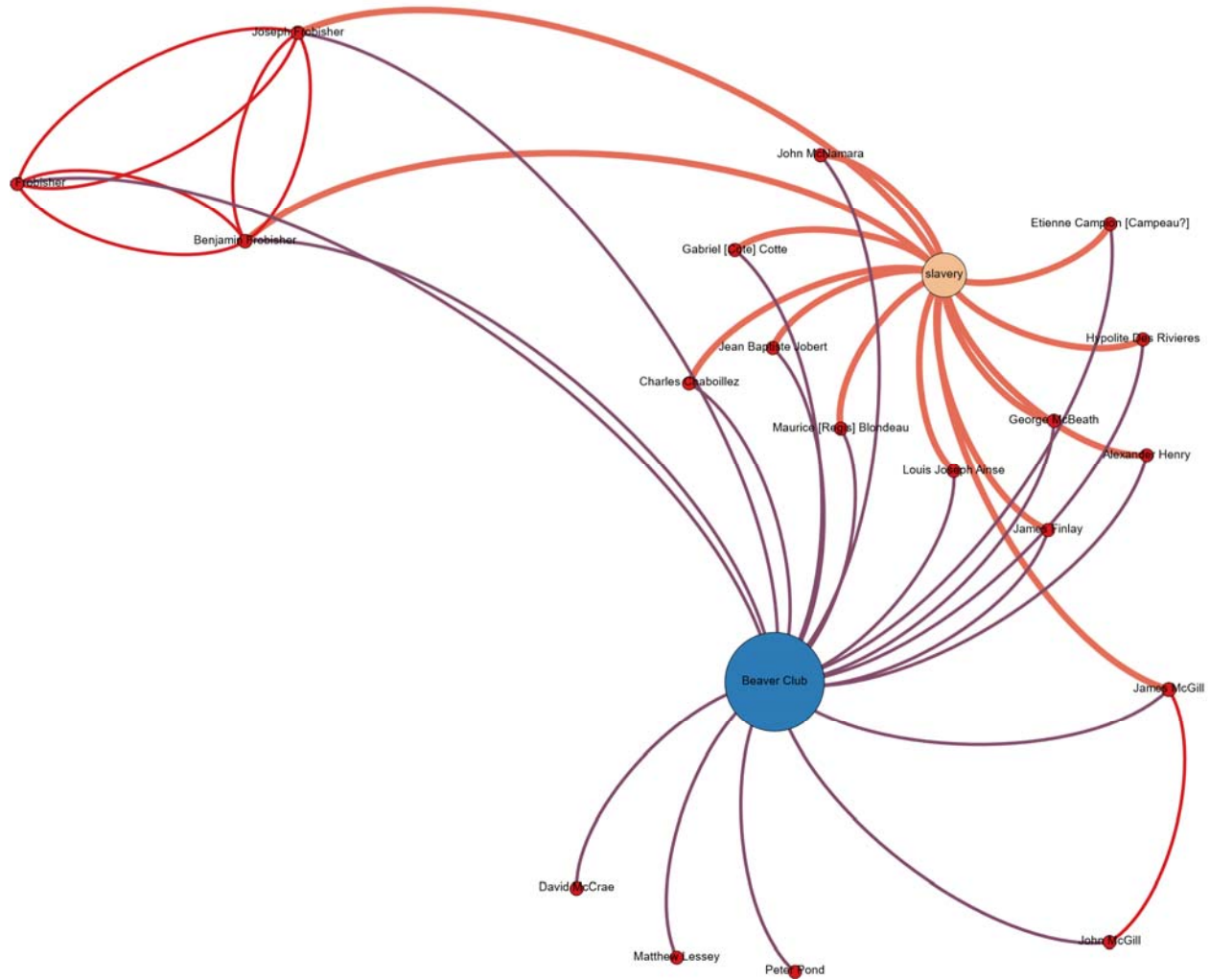


Figure 2: Original Beaver Club Members' identified connections with slavery

Although there is some overlap between the names of the founding members of the Beaver Club and the original partners of the North West Company, there are a few early Nor'Westers who have not yet been discussed. As already noted, John Gregory, in addition to his other involvement with slavery, brokered the purchase of an enslaved person for the North West Company itself. George McBeath's involvement has also already been considered. Some of Isaac Todd's connections with slavery have been discussed, although he, too, was not one of the founding members of the Beaver Club. Todd was also involved in the purchase and then attempted resale of an Indigenous slave named Mano in 1769, and in an effort to locate an adult male slave as requested by the firm Rankin & Edgar.⁷⁷ As the son of Sarah or Sally Ainse, Nicholas Montour must have grown up with slaves as part of his home life.⁷⁸ Simon McTavish's wife Marguerite was the daughter of Charles Chaboillez. Trudel identifies the Indigenous slave Jacques as a slave of Simon McTavish when he died in 1783 at the age of 12.⁷⁹ Jean-Etienne Waddens, could be added, and the McCord family were known slave owners. Jacques Duperon Baby, wrote Francis Cleary, owned "no fewer than thirty slaves."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Demers, "Keeping a Store," 405-408.

⁷⁸ François Béland, "MONTOUR, NICHOLAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/montour_nicholas_5E.html.

⁷⁹ Fernand Ouellet, "McTAVISH, SIMON," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mctavish_simon_5E.html; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 379.

⁸⁰ Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 504; Trudel 57, 428. Trudel shows a "Porteous" with no first name on 420, Harry Duckworth cautions that there were two men by that name, one of whom was involved in business with Phyn and Ellice, and one a fur trader who died in 1782 when he fell from his horse. The children of this latter John Porteous were raised by John McGill. Harry Duckworth, personal communication, 15 December 2020, My thanks to Dr. Duckworth for his invaluable help in sorting out these identities; Description, and inventory of papers in University of New Brunswick, The Loyalist Collection, "John Porteous," MIC-Loyalist FC LFR .P6J6P3. Available at <https://loyalist.lib.unb.ca/node/4355>. Accessed 11 December 2020. Porteous's name also appears as a witness in a slave transaction involving James Sterling Smith, *The Slave in Canada*, 72; Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec*, 61; Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 377. Francis Cleary, "Notes on the Early History of Essex," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, vol. vi, 1905, reprint 1975, 66-75, 73; Farmer, *The history of Detroit and Michigan*, 344.

William Grant owned at least one Indigenous slave.⁸¹ Alexander Henry the Younger's involvement will be discussed later. John McTavish was certainly not opposed to slavery. McTavish became, upon his marriage to Emily Caton, a plantation slave owner, a role he did not relinquish nor shy away from. Carrollton Hall, the estate given to Caton and McTavish as a wedding gift, included a slave quarters. The McTavishes eventually sold the estate to their son who later advertised the plantation for sale noting "This splendid Mansion Farm, now offered, to include 38 Slaves, 26 head of Horses, 20 head of Cattle, all the Farming Utensils, Crop on hand, with the Growing Crop. The whole for \$100,000 "⁸²

As with the members of the Beaver Club, there are other fur traders who were involved with the North West Company but whose involvement with slavery may have been a little more circumspect. Donald Sutherland married Margaret Robertson, the daughter of Daniel Robertson, who had been the commander of Michilimackinac in the 1780s. During his time there Robertson promoted Sutherland's interests. He also owned several slaves, including the parents of Pierre Bonga, who will be discussed later, as will the slavery connections of fur trader Angus Shaw.⁸³ With so many connections between slavery and the fur trade, others including William Holmes, Peter Pangman, Alexander MacKenzie, Roderick McKenzie, Patrick Small, Robert Grant, and Cuthbert Grant could never have been very far from it.

⁸¹ Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 339-340; Joanne Burgess, "GRANT, WILLIAM (1743-1810)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/grant_william_1743_1810_5E.html; Brian Young includes the Grants in a list of slave-holding families. Brian Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec: The Taschereaus and McCords* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 34.

⁸² National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Carrollton Hall. Available at https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-1550.pdf. Accessed 11 December 2020.

⁸³ Myron Momryk, "SUTHERLAND, DANIEL," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sutherland_daniel_6E.html; Mattie Marie Harper, "French Africans in Ojibwe Country: Negotiating Marriage, Identity and Race, 1780-1890," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, Ethnic Studies, 2012, 2.

The preceding is in no way an exhaustive list of fur traders or their involvement in slavery in what would become eastern Canada. A quick comparison of Trudel's *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires* with W.S. Wallace's biographical dictionary in *Documents Relating to the North West Company* and Masson's *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* alone could add the names of Thomas Corry, Thomas McMurray, Jacques Giasson, Joseph Howard, and probably Josiah Bleakely, for a start. Although not included in Trudel's dictionary, perhaps because he appears to have been dealing in slaves in the fur country rather than Montreal, Hugh Faries can also be added to this list.⁸⁴ Faries wrote in his Rainy Lake diary for May 10th: "The Devil set off. I gave him ½ keg of rum, & a few goods, with 45 plus that he owed me for his daughter. Jourdain arrived from the Long Sault with 20 plus. on his arrival I gave him the Devil's daughter, for 500^{lb} GPC [Grand Portage Currency]."⁸⁵ Similarly, in his 1800 to 1801 Fort Alexandria fur trade journal, Archibald Norman McLeod, who was located on the upper Assibiboine River, wrote on 8 May 1801, "took the Slave Woman, whom next Fall I shall sell for a good price to one of the men. She was wife to the Deceased old man." then on 16 May 1801 he wrote "I left Alexandria accompanied, by Collin & my slave boy Jack all three on horse back."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ W. Stewart Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 427, 434, 439, 447, 458; L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest : récits de voyages, lettres et rapports inédits relatifs au nord-ouest canadien : publié avec une esquisse historique et des annotations*, (Québec : A. Côté, 1889), 412; Trudel's slave owners include a "Bleakly," with no first name, given Josiah Bleakely's connections, this could well be he. Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 282, 306, 335, 347, 378. This brief survey should not be taken as an exhaustive list.

⁸⁵ Although this diary is generally attributed to Faries, it is possible that the author was Thomas McMurray. Peter Pond, John Macdonell, Archibald Norman McLeod, and Hugh Faries, *Five fur traders of the Northwest: Being the narrative of Peter Pond and the diaries of John Macdonell, Archibald N. McLeod, Hugh Faries, and Thomas Connor* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Published for the Minnesota Society of the Colonial Dames of America, University of Minnesota Press, 1933), 189, 240.

⁸⁶ Norman McLeod, Journal, Alexandria, 1800-1801. An electronic transcription. MFTP #0028, McGill University, In Pursuit of Adventure, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm. Accessed 10 December 2020.

Conclusions

The world in which eastern fur traders operated was one in which slavery not only existed but was an integral part of the trade itself. Through their involvement in chattel slavery, fur traders and their respective companies could benefit from the labour, the skills, and the relationships of their slaves, both Black and Indigenous. They could, of course, also profit through the buying and selling of these slaves themselves. As chattel, enslaved people could stand as markers for debt, and could be sold at a loss or profit, all the while also serving in many cases as a symbol of affluence that could not but help a business looking to make a good impression. Within the context of the Northern North American fur trade originating out of the east, out of Montreal, Detroit, and Michilimackinac, and spreading west, slavery was every bit as embedded and imbricated in the colonial project as it was in other areas of commerce, and other parts of the French and British empires.

Chapter Two: “Which, on my refusal, Poitras purchased:”¹ Slavery, unfreedom, and the fur trade in the pays d’en haut

As the reach of fur trade slavery extended beyond Montreal, Michilimackinac, and Detroit, it threaded its way into the pays d’en haut, past the relatively urban environments of these eastern fur trading commercial centres, and into the heart of the northern North American continent. With it came racialized colonial constructions of who was susceptible to certain kinds and degrees of freedom and unfreedom. It also brought with it the ambiguities and gaps in the record that have challenged historians of slavery throughout the historiography. As has been noted, it can sometimes be difficult to discern from the records whether a person of colour was enslaved, or if they were an indentured or a paid servant. This is especially true of the Black people who participated in the fur trade.

Being Black in the pays d’en haut: Challenges in recognition

Of the records surveyed so far, references rarely clearly and unequivocally tie a Black person to enslavement. As discussed previously, there could be a number of factors contributing to this, including naming practices fur traders were familiar with, and, as the eighteenth century was drawing to a close, a reticence to clearly identify enslaved persons in a climate where slavery was becoming less socially and legally acceptable. On the other hand, slavery, which in its purest form embodies a power relationship, may not, in the case of Blacks, have required the word “slave” to convey the inherent power relationship between White and Black. Being served by Black servants, whether enslaved or contracted, as a number of historians including Harvey Amani Whitfield have noted, conveyed status.² This status was created and expressed through racial construction. As Marcus Rediker writes in *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, “the

¹ John Macdonell, Journal, Assiniboines and Rivière Qu'Appelle, 1793-1795. An electronic transcription. MFTP #0007, McGill University, In Pursuit of Adventure, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm. Accessed 10 December 2020.

² Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 64.

[slave]ship-factory also produced ‘race.’ At the beginning of the voyage, captains hired a motley crew of sailors who would, on the coast of Africa, become ‘white men.’ At the beginning of the Middle Passage, captains loaded on board the vessel a multiethnic collection of Africans, who would in the American port, become ‘black people,’ or a ‘negro race.’ The voyage thus transformed those who made it.”³

Thus, as Black people had already been transformed by the slave ship, fur traders may not have felt a pressing need to explicitly label Black people as “slaves,” a point which is driven home by an exchange between HBC fur traders Samuel Hearne and Humphrey Martin in 1740. In a letter to Martin, Hearne mistook members of Fort Prince of Wales’ “‘accomptant’ and assistant to the chief,” Ferdinand Jacobs’ family for “Negroes.” Writing from Churchill to Marten at York Factory, Hearn complained “I could have wished Sir you had sent me an Account of the things sent by Mr. Holt, otherwise I shall not know what is chargeable in our Accounts, as yet I have only seen two Hogs and four Negroes.” Marten’s reply was swift and dunning, “those Persons you are pleased to stile Negroes at Prince Wales Fort, I need not inform you Sir that one is the Grandson of Mr. Ferdinand Jacobs, that the other three are the Father, the Aunt and the Cousin of that child.”⁴

The ambiguity that words such as “Negro,” and terms such as “my servant” convey, however, makes it difficult to completely reconstruct the racialized landscape of freedom and unfreedom Black people would have experienced in the fur country. In a Montreal court case in 1803, “a Negro of the defendant’s” (NWC fur trader Duncan McGillivray) was described as having “torn to bits, burned and carried on the ends of sticks” a tent belonging to the complainant, an

³ Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking Press, 2007), 10.

⁴ HBCA B.239/b/40, f 27d, York Factory Correspondence Book, 1718-1720, Samuel Hearne Chief at Churchill to Humphrey Marten Chief at York Fort 2 September, 1780; HBCA B.239/b/40, f 28, York Factory Correspondence Book, 1779- 1780, Mr. Humphrey Martin Chief of York Fort to Mr. Samuel Hearne Chief at Churchill, 12 September 1780; Shirlee Anne Smith, “JACOBS, FERDINAND,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 8, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jacobs_ferdinand_4E.html.

opposition trader at Grand Portage.⁵ In 1817, Charles Oakes Ermatinger, whose father Lawrence had owned slaves, wrote to Lord Selkirk that “Antoine the Black man has remained at my place several days and was left here from some misunderstanding between him and the crew of the canoe.”⁶ Joseph Lewis, whose life will be discussed later, is another example of the ambiguity of such terms, even for some of his contemporaries. On the other hand, as will be seen below, Indigenous people were more often referred to as “slaves” in fur trade records, possibly reflecting the fact that the construction of their race by fur traders included the very real possibility that they were not enslaved or anyone’s servant, so that a clear clarification of their status was needed. Thus, the work that the ambiguous phrase “the Negro” does in John McKay’s Lac la Pluie post journal of displaying the power relationship between Mr. Boyer and “the Negro” may have been enough when he wrote: “at 10am... Mr. Boyer invited me & men to a

⁵ Bruce M. White, *Grand Portage as a Trading Post: Patterns of Trade at "the Great Carrying Place"* (Grand Marais, Minn: Grand Portage National Monument, National Park Service, 2005), 110.

⁶ LAC, MG19-E1, f 4068 (letter begins previous page), Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk fonds (hereafter “Selkirk Papers”), C. O. Ermatinger to “My Lord,” 23 September, 1817. Available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c4/926?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 14 December 2020; M. Momryk, “ERMATINGER, LAWRENCE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed January 4, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ermatinger_lawrence_4E.html.

Brian Stewart notes that Charles Oakes Ermatinger’s father, Lawrence Ermatinger, dealt in slaves: “He asked a colleague in Quebec to get as much as he could by selling a female slave, in 1772, writing, ‘She cost me \$130.’ She had neither friends nor relatives, he added, and no acquaintances to ruin her. Lawrence finally sold her for \$100.” W. Brian Stewart, *The Ermatingers A 19th-Century Ojibwa-Canadian Family* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 11. Nancy Christie notes “a Mohawk chief,” who “possessed a slave boy whom he married to a slave woman owned by Lawrence Ermatinger,” around 1773. Nancy Christie, *The Formal and Informal Politics of British Rule in Post-Conquest Quebec, 1760-1837. A Northern Bastille* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 78.

Other members of the Ermatinger family had Black servants, Margaret Arnett McLeod notes that Letitia Hargrave mentioned “volatile Frank Ermatinger,” nephew to Charles Oakes Ermatinger, “whose valet, a performing negro, obliged gratuitously in Canadian streets” in her correspondence. Letitia Mactavish Hargrave, and Margaret Arnett MacLeod. *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), cxxxix.

dance but the Negro who played on the fiddle got beastly drunk and spoiled our diversion.”⁷ Fur trader George Nelson sometimes used a similar turn of phrase to describe Samuel Welles, a Black engagé.⁸ Given, as Rushforth has discussed, that the word “nègre” had already given way to “noir,” or “black,” as a signifier of enslavement or potential enslavement (as reflected in the name “Code Noir”), the use of both “Negro” and “Black,” especially when qualified with “the,” or, as we will see in a moment, “my,” cannot be read as an uncomplicated or unproblematic description of a human being or their freedom.⁹ Such is certainly the case when, for example, in May of 1799, “Thome negre de Mons^r Chevalier Labruere demeurant au Bourg de Boucherville,” engaged or was engaged to work for “Mons^r Jean Bte Berthelot marchand voyageur” with the Chevalier’s initials and signature witnessing the agreement.¹⁰ A 1794 contract engaging Constant “appartenant à Pierre Foretier Ecuyer a ce present et de son consentement” to Jean Baptiste Tabeau was even clearer about Constant’s status. He was the property of Foretier, but would be freed if he fulfilled this contract dutifully.¹¹ But while the ambiguities inherent in so many of the terms used in legal documents and fur trade journals alike have frustrated historians for decades, they also serve to foreground how non-binary freedom could be, especially for persons racially constructed as powerless, a lesson writ large in the history of the Bonga family.

The Bonga Family: Degrees of Freedom

In published fur trade history, Pierre Bonga emerges as an adult labourer in July of 1800 when the North West Company fur trader Alexander Henry the Younger and his crew of engagés

⁷HBCA B.105/a/2, f.13, Lac La Pluie Post Journal, by John McKay, for 1794-1795, 25 December 1794.

⁸ Harry W. Duckworth, *Friends, Foes, and Furs: George Nelson's Lake Winnipeg Journals, 1804–1822* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019). See page 22: “Sam Welles a Negro,” page 30: “the Negro,” page 31: “Sam Welles the Negro,” and page 33: Sam (the Negro).

⁹ Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 355.

¹⁰ BAnQ, 06m_cn605s22_17990506_engagement_berthelot, “Engagement Berthelot,” Le 6 May 1799 payé 3*Pardevant les notaires du District de Montreal dans la province du Bas Canada soussignés; Fut Present Thome negre de Mons^r Chevalier Labruere demeurant au Bourg de Boucherville : Lequel a reconnu s’être engagé et s’engage par les présentes à Mons^r Jean Bte Berthelot marchand voyageur.

¹¹ BAnQ, 06M_CN601S121_17940408_agagement_constant, “Agagement Contant,” “Le 8 d’avril 1794— Engagement de Constant _____ a M^r Jean Bte Tabeau Délivré 2 l am.”

embarked from Grand Portage to winter and trade in what is today North Dakota. In his published journal of the trip, Henry notes that the party in his own canoe included "Pierre Bonza or Bonga: a negro." Identified by Henry as "my negro," and "the negro," as well as "my servant," in other parts of his journal, Bonga was the child of parents who had been enslaved until about 1787.¹² Although records relating to Pierre Bonga's childhood are missing, and those of his parents are sketchy, in all probability he had been born into slavery. How he entered the fur trade, and whether this was as a slave or as an engage is not, however, clear. What is clear is that, despite coming from a background of chattel slavery, Pierre Bonga, together with his Ojibwe wife, and at least three of their sons went on to successful careers as traders, becoming part of the legend of early upper midwest American history as some of the first Black pioneers in the region. While the story of the Bonga family as fur traders and pioneers is interesting, a closer look at that story also highlights the complicated ways that degrees of freedom could play out and could be experienced within the North American fur trade during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹³

In the North American fur trade at the end of the long eighteenth century, freedom was both a relative and a contingent state. Here, highly prized not only by the partners, factors, and bourgeois of the commercial fur trade concerns, but also by many of the rank and file who chose to become "freemen" inland, freedom could range from the relative independence of fur trade partners through various degrees of temporarily unfree contract and indenture labour to the open-ended unfreedom of chattel slavery. While these possibilities were influenced by, and experienced in, the intersections of race, class, and gender, age, and particularly age as it intersected with these other factors, also played a part in determining the freedom or unfreedom

¹² Alexander Henry, David Thompson, and Elliott Coues, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814. Exploration and Adventure Among the Indians on the Red, Saskatchewan, Missouri and Columbia Rivers*, (New York: F.P. Harper, 1897), 50, 52, 77, 160, 231; Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 198.

¹³ For a careful and detailed study of the Bonga family, see Harper "French Africans in Ojibwe Country."

of individuals, in turn making young people who were far away from their networks of family particularly vulnerable to exploitation or abuse.

Based on existing records, the trajectories of the Bonga family in the fur trade appear accomplished but not exceptional for fur trade labourers of the time, were it not for one document. In 1812, fur trader Angus Shaw, acting as tutor or guardian, bound the then 14-year-old son of Pierre Bonga, Jean-Baptiste (who was almost certainly George Bonga¹⁴) to Archibald Norman McLeod through a contract, which, unlike many other apprenticeship agreements of the period, included no financial payment at its successful completion.¹⁵ As Harry Duckworth notes, apprenticeships had a long history both within and outside of the fur trade and were often seen as beneficial to both apprentices and their masters. Masters gained the labour of their apprentices, while apprentices learned both a trade and, by the late 1780s, basic literacy in reading, writing, and essential mathematical calculations. For children growing up in the interior of North America, an apprenticeship could offer access to better future employment at the cost of, usually, about seven years of labour.¹⁶ It is likely that this is what Pierre Bonga had in mind when he entrusted his son to Shaw, however, given the number of extant apprenticeship contracts that provided a terminal payment, it is also likely that Shaw was going against the accepted practice

¹⁴ Other than this notarial contract, there is no record of any child of Pierre Bonga named “Jean-Baptiste,” and records consistently indicate that “Jack Bonga” was only born around or after 1815. George Bonga and Michel Robert were baptized together in Montreal, a few months before this contract was notarized. At the same time, no contracts have been located for George Bonga, although he himself noted he had been educated in Montreal as a child, while his father was working out of Fort William, making it very likely that this was in fact George Bonga.

¹⁵ Based on a survey of contracts in the St. Boniface Historical Society, Voyageur Contracts database at <http://archivesshsb.mb.ca>. Accessed 15 August 2018. A NWC partner, Angus Shaw left the northwest in 1808 to become a partner in McTavish, McGillivrays & Co. of Montreal, the North West Company’s Agents at Montreal. He left the firm in 1814, returning to the northwest during the company’s bitter struggles with the Hudson’s Bay Company, during which period he provided strong leadership for the North Westers. See W. S. Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 497-8; and Gratien Allaire, “Shaw, Angus,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed August 15, 2018, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/shaw_angus_6E.html.

¹⁶ Personal communication, 5 July 2018. Theresa Schenck has also noted that George Bonga benefitted in this agreement through learning to read and write. Personal communication, 14 October 2017.

of providing a cash payment when he negotiated the terms of the younger Bonga's apprenticeship.¹⁷

As for many other Black people in what would become Canada, the records do not speak definitively to Bonga's freedom or unfreedom. Although Bonga first emerged in the historiography in Henry's departing canoe, the name of Pierre Bonga appears in 1796 in the books of John Sayer and Co. in the Fond du Lac Department.¹⁸ Sayer and Co. dissolved about a year later, and Sayer joined the North West Company, the same company that employed Alexander Henry the Younger to travel to the Red River Department in 1800.¹⁹ Henry himself never explicitly states whether Bonga was enslaved or not. In December of 1800, he noted in his journal that "my negro went to his traps, so that I was alone."²⁰ In other entries Henry refers to Bonga as "my servant," a term that could serve equally for someone contracted, indentured, or enslaved.²¹ The list of men attached to the Lower Red River in 1805 identifies Pierre Bonga as "Negro," while at the same time showing he was paid for his labour.²² The ambiguity of these references to Bonga has led historians to debate whether Pierre Bonga joined the brigade under contract, or as an enslaved person, a debate that foregrounds the difficulty historians of slavery encounter whenever they engage with written records. As Whitfield notes, "The line between slaves and servants could be ambiguous and easily manipulated."²³ Similarly, Frank Mackey has

¹⁷ St. Boniface Historical Society, Voyageur Contracts database, search: "Bouga," available at: <http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/list?q=Bouga%2C+John+Baptiste+&p=1&ps=20> . Accessed 23 May 2018.

¹⁸ Harry Duckworth, personal communication, 27 March 2018.

¹⁹ Henry, Thompson, Coues, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, 160.

²⁰ Henry, Thompson, Coues, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, 50, 52, 160.

²¹ According to Elliot Coues, Henry also refers to one "Demarais" as his servant, making his use of the term even more difficult to decipher. Henry, Thompson, Coues, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, 72, 100, 231.

²² North West Company. Men's Names at the Athabasca River Department [etc.], 1805. An electronic transcription. MFTP #0031. McGill University, *In Pursuit of Adventure*, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm. Accessed 10 December 2020.

²³ Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 11, 13, 77.

shown that the legal status of slavery in Quebec remains poorly understood by historians. In part he attributes this to scant historical study on the subject, but jurisdictional ambiguities, and the impact of legal decisions on the application of the law further complicate the pursuit of a definitive answer about when it was no longer legal to buy, to sell, or to own a slave in Lower Canada during the early 1800s.²⁴ The lack of certainty in the use of terms in the records relating to Pierre Bonga's fur trade service clearly demonstrate that, in the fur trade, as elsewhere in the colonial world, the experience of freedom and unfreedom cannot be conceived of as a binary. That the records take pains to note that Bonga was "a negro" was not accidental, a decision that highlights the fact that being black was a category freighted with status and meaning for both the servant or enslaved and the master. Among the fur trade elite, having black servants, whether under contract, indenture, or through enslavement was a status symbol, while being identified as Black placed the individual into a category of people for whom freedom could not be taken for granted.²⁵

Born about 1777, to Jean and Marie Jeanne Bonga, Pierre Bonga would have been about 20 years old when he worked for Sayer at Fond du Lac, and 23 when he accompanied Henry the younger to the Red River. Bonga's parents had been freed by their owner Captain Daniel Robertson, probably while Robertson and the Bongas were living in Michilimakinac, Sayer's base of operation. Although records indicate that Jean and Marie Jeanne Bonga were free by 1787, there is no indication of whether their children were free at that time. In fact, Robertson had, that same year, freed another slave, Hilaire Lamour, but had held on to Lamour's wife Catherine until her husband was able to raise the money to purchase her. The available records do not say whether Robertson freed the entire Bonga family or only the parents, or even just one of the parents, and if only the parents, whether they were able to raise the money to purchase and then free their children.²⁶

²⁴ While beyond the scope of this paper, Frank Mackey's *Done with Slavery* provides an excellent discussion of this question, see especially 11, 72-78.

²⁵ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 118.

²⁶ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 142; Mattie Marie Harper, "French Africans in Ojibwe Country," 15.

What can be known about the life of Pierre Bonga in the fur trade is that, even if he was in the district as an indentured or contracted servant, his life would not have been entirely his own. At the same time, in the Great Lakes fur trade, freedom and status went hand-in-hand. As Jacqueline Peterson has shown, it was not material wealth but the freedom to remain at settlements such as Michilimackinac during the winter and enjoy leisurely social activities that conveyed status during the later part of the French fur trade period.²⁷ In Pierre Bonga's time, a voyageur under engagement was not a free agent. In fact, a fur trader could purchase a servant's contract from whoever held that engagement, paying for the man's debt to the contract-holder rather than paying wages to the engagé. Importantly, competing fur traders agreed to respect each others' contracts, choosing to deal with each other rather than with engagés directly, so that a voyageur under contract was not free to negotiate on his own behalf. As William McGillivray wrote in 1800, "We hire no Men who owe their Descent considering this a principle not to be deviated from in determining to adhere strictly to it ... if a Man was Free at the Point au Chapeau we do not consider him at liberty to hire until he has gone to it."²⁸

Of course, in actual point of fact, in in the interior there was little fur traders could do if an employee was determined to desert, and many engagés were able to successfully convert their relative unfreedom as labourers into the relative freedom of a "freeman" through the community and mutual support they could find in country marriages with Indigenous women who were willing to bring them into relationship with their extended families through marriage. For many, these marriages and the relationships they engaged offered a degree of security and the possibility of personal freedom that a job with a fur trade company never could. Even for those men who did not leave the fur trade to become freemen, connection to an Indigenous family through marriage offered them more options, allowing them greater scope to negotiate better compensation or working conditions by threatening to desert, and providing them with more comfort and security.²⁹ More than one fur trader must have known the feelings fur trader George

²⁷ Jacqueline Peterson, "Metis genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, eds. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (St Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001), 47-48.

²⁸ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 144.

²⁹ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 144, 295.

Nelson wrote about when he noted “The secret satisfaction I felt in being *compelled* (what an agreeable word when it accords with our desires) to marry for my safety.”³⁰ In the fur trade northwest, marriage to Indigenous women could connect young men far from home with the advice and care of a father and the security and resources of an experienced community, so that marriage to Indigenous women, with their ability to create and sustain rich relationships, could provide traders and especially engagés opportunities to experience greater freedom than their single counterparts enjoyed.

And so, it was in this environment that, by the late 1700s, Pierre Bonga had entered into a relationship with at least one Ojibwe woman. Referred to only as “O gib way quay”³¹ in the Ransom Judd Powell Papers’ genealogies, and as “a woman of the Indian Country” in her children’s baptismal records, through marriage Bonga’s wife or wives brought him into the intricately connected Great Lakes and northern Minnesota Ojibwe world, and in the late 17 and early 1800s, brought him at least four children.³² So, on March 12, 1802, Alexander Henry wrote in his journal at Pembina “Pierre’s wife was delivered of a daughter — the first fruit at this fort, and a very black one.”³³ This may have been the daughter of Pierre Bonga who was baptized in Montreal in 1811 as “Blanche Bonga.”³⁴ But this was not Pierre Bonga’s only child. Baptismal and census records

³⁰ George Nelson, Laura L. Peers, and Theresa M. Schenck, *My First Years in the Fur Trade: The Journals of 1802-1804* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 19.

³¹ Ransom-Judd-Powell genealogy records available at <https://www.maquah.net/genealogy/Powell/POWELL.20.html> Accessed 23 May 2018.

³² Ransom-Judd-Powell genealogy records available at <https://www.maquah.net/genealogy/Powell/POWELL.20.html> Accessed 23 May 2018. Baptismal Registers, *St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church*, Montreal, 1810, Etienne Bongo and 1811, George Bonga. Drouin collection records accessed through Ancestry.ca. Accessed 23 May 2018.

³³ Henry, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, 194.

³⁴ Baptisms for Etienne Bongo, 18 August 1810, St. Gabriel St. Presbyterian Church, 1810. Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 10 December 2020. Blanche Bonga was baptized on 11 November 1811, at the same time as her brother George, and two other fur trade children, Alexander Henry, son of Robert Henry, and Michel Robert, son of Francois Robert; they all appear in a single entry. St. Gabriel St. Presbyterian Church, 1811, f 28d, Institut

indicate that his sons George and Etienne or Stephen were born about this time, roughly between 1799 and 1804 or 5, probably while the family was in the Fond du Lac District.³⁵ Through his wife and children, during this period Pierre Bonga was becoming increasingly connected to what Brenda Macdougall has described as the “strong bonds of community shaped by intricate webs of familial interconnections.”³⁶

For his part, Pierre Bonga continued to work with the North Westers until they merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821. In 1805 he was listed in the Athabasca district, working at the substantial wage of 750 livres, in 1811-1812 he was probably at Fort de Prairies, and at the time of merger, having returned to the Fond du Lac area, his salary in the North West Company’s Grand Ledger was still 600 livres.³⁷ However, by 1814 the sporadic nature of his wages in the North West Company’ Grand Ledger suggests that he may have been operating more as a freeman than an employee, taking on work with the Company at times, and working for himself at others. In fact, in 1814 his account, while not credited with wages by the North West Company, was credited with money from McTavish, McGillivrays & Co, who operated as agents for the North West Company in Montreal.³⁸ Yet despite his sporadic employment with the North West Company, unlike many voyageurs, Pierre Bonga was able to maintain a positive balance in his account. Both Bonga’s significant wages when he did work for the Company, and the fact that he was able to support a family and maintain a balance in his account paints a picture of a man who was able to choose when he would work for the Company and when he would work for

Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

³⁵ See, particularly, Drouin Collection, Baptismal Registers, *St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church*, Montreal, 1810, Etienne Bongo and 1811, George Bonga, as noted above.

³⁶ Brenda Macdougall, “Speaking of Metis: Reading Family Life into Colonial Records,” *Ethnohistory* 1 (January 2014), 61:1, 28.

³⁷ North West Company. Men's Names at the Athabasca River Department [etc.], 1805. An electronic transcription. MFTP #0031. McGill University, In Pursuit of Adventure, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm. Accessed 23 May 2018; HBCA, F.4/1-62, *Northwest Company Account Books*, Grand Ledger.

³⁸ By this time Archibald Norman McLeod was a partner in McTavish, McGillivrays & Co. of Montreal, the NWC Company’s Montreal Agents. For a biography of McLeod, see W. S. Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 480-481.

other employers or for himself, a situation that continued after the merger of the North West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1820, Henry Schoolcraft found Bonga living in a village of "Chippeway Indians, of fourteen lodges, and containing a population of about sixty souls.... Three miles above the mouth of the St. Louis River."³⁹ In 1822, Pierre Bonga's name appears in both American Fur Company, and Hudson's Bay Company records.⁴⁰ George Simpson described travelling with Bonga, exposing a condescending humour over what he clearly saw as a naïve misunderstanding of racial construction. "The expedition in question, besides Messrs. McKenzie and Rowand, the gentlemen in charge, consisted of eight or ten subordinate officers and a hundred men. After ascending to the utmost limits of the navigation for boats, surveying detachments were despatched in every direction, which met with many natives, who had never seen a European before. These unsophisticated savages, however, had their curiosity most strongly excited by a negro of the name of Pierre Bungo. This man they inspected in every possible way, twisting him about and pulling his hair, which was so different

³⁹ Henry R. Schoolcraft and Mentor L. Williams, *Schoolcraft's Narrative Journal of Travels: Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States, Extending from Detroit Through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River, in the Year 1820* (East Lansing, Mich: Michigan State University Press, 1992), 202.

⁴⁰Bruce M. White, *The Fur Trade in Minnesota: An Introductory Guide to Manuscript Sources (St Paul, MN, 1977)*, 34. "The expedition in question, besides Messrs. McKenzie and Rowand, the gentlemen in charge, consisted of eight or ten subordinate officers and a hundred men. After ascending to the utmost limits of the navigation for boats, surveying detachments were despatched in every direction, which met with many natives, who had never seen a European before. These unsophisticated savages, however, had their curiosity most strongly excited by a negro of the name of Pierre Bungo. This man they inspected in every possible way, twisting him about and pulling his hair, which was so different from their own flowing locks; and at length they came to the conclusion that Pierre Bungo was the oddest specimen of a white man they had ever seen." George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World: During the Years 1841 and 1842*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 80-81. (Harry Duckworth points out that working on the American Fur Company boats and accompanying Rowan in the same year may not have been possible, and that at least one of these references may be inaccurate. Personal communication 05 July 2018.) "These negroes, of whom there were formerly several in the Company's service, were universal favourites with the fair sex of the red race; and at the present day, we saw many an Indian that appeared to have a dash of the gentleman in black about him." Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World: During the Years 1841 and 1842*, vol. 1, 80-81. It goes without saying that Simpson's comments objectify both Indigenous and Black people, including his rather salacious tone, but it is also evident that his tone is aimed at both Indigenous and Black people.

from their own flowing locks; and at length they came to the conclusion that Pierre Bungo was the oddest specimen of a white man they had ever seen.”⁴¹

There is no evidence that Bonga understood his identity as defined only in opposition to Whiteness. In 1826 and 1827, Bonga had taken out licenses to trade on his own behalf at Round Lake and “Lac Winnepes” (possibly Winnebogoshish) respectively.⁴² His life, in short, fits Brenda Macdougall’s description of “freemen” as families that “were engaged in limited contracts with the [Company] and were hired to guide, freight, interpret, trade, and transport.... Freemen could become free traders when it benefited the economic needs of their families and the socio-cultural notions embedded in the reciprocal family model.”⁴³ In this environment Pierre Bonga and his children excelled.

But Pierre Bonga’s fur trade connections were not only with his Ojibwe in-laws. When he was assigned to the Athabasca Department in 1805, Pierre Bonga would have served under Archibald Norman McLeod. A partner in the North West Company, McLeod was in the Athabasca region from 1802 to 1809, which may explain why, when Bonga sent his son Etienne or Stephen to Montreal to start him on the road to a fur trade career, he entrusted McLeod to be his son’s tutor or guardian.⁴⁴ When Pierre Bonga then sent his son Jean-Baptiste/George to Montreal at about the same time, he appointed Angus Shaw as tutor. Interestingly, at about the same time another

⁴¹ Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World: During the Years 1841 and 1842*, 80-81. Again, as Harry Duckworth points out, working on the American Fur Company boats and accompanying Rowan in the same year may not have been possible, and that at least one of these references may be inaccurate. Personal communication 05 July 2018.

⁴² Larry Wyckoff, “Fur Trade Licenses Granted in the Michigan Superintendency, 1821-1840” Available at https://www.academia.edu/34513658/Fur_Trade_Licenses_Granted_in_the_Michigan_Superintendency_1821-1840 . Accessed 23 May 2018.

⁴³ Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 215.

⁴⁴ “Archibald Norman McLeod was a partner in the NWC by 1799; was in Athabasca from 1802 till 1809; became a partner in McTavish, McGillivrays & Co (then the NWC Montreal agents) about 1809; withdrew from the fur trade in 1821, and retired to Scotland, and then to Ireland.” Harry Duckworth personal communication, 27 March 2018.

young man, also the son of a voyageur and an Indigenous mother, Michel Robert, who was baptized at the same time as George Bonga, was entrusted by his father, Francois Robert, to the guardianship of Archibald Norman McLeod.⁴⁵ Within months of the baptisms of these two boys, Archibald Norman McLeod had, as tutor to Michel, bound Michel as an apprentice to Angus Shaw until he reached the age of majority. At the same time Angus Shaw bound Jean-Baptiste/George to Archibald Norman McLeod for the same term. These two contracts binding the boys both by and to their respective guardians made no provision at all for any sort of financial compensation for their labour, even though providing a terminal cash payment to apprentices was a common practice at the time.⁴⁶ And while it has not been possible to locate the contract that bound Etienne or Stephen to Angus Shaw in 1813, the notary's register records: "Power of Attorney by Archibald Norman McLeod as tutor to Etienne Bouga a minor to John McTavish Esq're to bind the said Minor to Angus Shaw as a servant," suggesting a similar arrangement.⁴⁷

Like many people during this time, McLeod was no stranger to slavery, a fact Pierre Bonga was probably aware of. As already mentioned, McLeod's 1800-1801 journal discusses buying and selling slaves, in this case almost certainly Indigenous slaves, writing "I left Alexandria accompanied, by Collin & my slave boy Jack all three on horse back," as well as "took the Slave Woman, whom next Fall I shall sell for a good price to one of the men. She was wife to the

⁴⁵ There is no evidence in the records to suggest that Robert was Black, his vulnerability to this sort of labour contract may well have derived from constructions of Indigeneity as also susceptible to theft of labour including both slavery and indentures that involved degrees of unfreedom based in racist constructions of both Black and Indigenous people.

⁴⁶ St. Boniface Historical Society, Voyageur Contracts database, search: Bouga and search: Robert, Michel. <http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/list?q=Bouga%2C+John+Baptiste+&p=1&ps=20> . Accessed 23 May 2018.

⁴⁷ John Gerbrand Beek notary, "Etienne Bongu," No 2162 8 May 1813. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec; Montréal, Quebec, Canada; Collection: *Fonds Cour Supérieure, District judiciaire de Montréal. Cote CN601. Greffes de notaires, 1648-1967.*; District: *Montréal*; Title: *Beek, John Gerbrand (1795-1821)*. Fonds Cour Supérieure. Greffes de notaires. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Accessed through Ancestry.ca. Accessed 23 May 2018.

Deceased old man.”⁴⁸ But despite McLeod’s participation in slavery and enslavement, it is certainly the case that Pierre Bonga had sent his children to Montreal in the care of McLeod and Shaw to gain them an education that would allow them to enter the fur trade on better terms than as ordinary labourers, not to become unpaid labour themselves. In the end, returning to what is today Minnesota and the web of relationships that connected them to family and land, both George and Stephen were moderately literate fur traders. The lapse between Stephen’s baptism in 1810 and his engagement in 1813 suggests that he may have had time to receive some education while in Montreal. On the other hand, the five or six months between when George was baptized and when he was apprenticed to McLeod left little time for much formal education. In later life, George Bonga would write that “My father was in the employ of the [North West Company] there headquarters was at Fort William Lake Superior. I left there when I was a little boy, as I have no recollection, of the place & went to School in Montreal, as there was no one, to take any particular interest about me. I did not get as good an education, as I might have had.”⁴⁹ At the end of the day, this modest education came at the cost of about a decade of unpaid labour.

Although age is essential to understanding the vulnerability children like George and Stephen Bonga experienced, the effects of the intersection of age with race is an even more important consideration when tracing their trajectories. The frequent references to “negro” in records relating to the Bongas foreground the importance of this category at the time and in this context. But it is not enough on its own to explain the Bonga children’s unfreedom. In 1802 ten-year-old Samuel Luke, “Negro” was bound by his mother as a servant to “Simon McTavish of Montreal” in exchange for “Meat, Drink, Washing Lodging Wearing Apparel & all other Necessaries in Sickness and in health Meet & Convenient for such a Servant.” As with the Bonga children and Michel Robert, and despite having his mother’s guardianship, Samuel Luke’s contract provided

⁴⁸ Norman McLeod, Journal, Alexandria, 1800-1801. An electronic transcription. MFTP #0028 McGill University, In Pursuit of Adventure, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm Accessed 23 May 2018.

⁴⁹ George Bonga, “*Letters of George Bonga*,” *Journal of Negro History* 12 (1927), 53.

no financial compensation for his labour.⁵⁰ Part of the explanation for this certainly lies in the fact that the child's deceased father, a "free negro" had worked for McTavish, in effect making the young Samuel and his mother part of McTavish's household, and dependent on him.⁵¹ But this dependency in turn reflected the way that race informed and limited the options and freedom people of colour experienced at the time. There is no evidence that Michel Robert, son of Francois Robert was Black. What Michel Robert and the Bonga children did have in common was that both had been born into the fur trade northwest to Indigenous mothers, placing Michel Robert in the racialized category of "Indian," or "metis," while the Bonga children and Luke were placed in the constructed categories of "negro," or "black," in all of these cases, the children belonged to groups racially constructed as potential chattel slaves. While fur trade apprenticeship contracts during the period reflect a sensitivity to the idea of race that includes differentiating between Black and Indigenous, they also reflect a clear and distinct differentiation between "White," and non-White. Young White men like George Nelson, who was apprenticed at age 15 in 1802 as a "commis" or clerk, received a terminal payment, in Nelson's case a payment of 75 livres, for their labour. Here, Nelson's contract, negotiated under the guardianship of his father, also reflects how race and social class could offer benefits to some; Nelson's ability to enter the fur trade as a clerk rather than as a labourer clearly demonstrates how both access to education and social class were inseparable from and informed by race at the time.

In the fur trade, race could inform susceptibility to a range of unfreedoms, a state that could be further influenced by age. If both Indigenous and Black people could be legally enslaved, the minor children of both Indigenous and Black people could be even more vulnerable to exploitation. Both as minors, and as the children of non-White parents, one Indigenous and one Black in the case of the Bonga children, within the fur trade the Bonga children and Michel Robert were all particularly vulnerable. Until they reached majority at the age of 21, a point that itself could be difficult to establish, with the life events of Indigenous people often poorly formally documented and ages frequently estimated, even if they were considered "free," they

⁵⁰ St. Boniface Historical Society, Voyageur Contracts database, search: Luke, Samuel. <http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/list?q=Bouga%2C+John+Baptiste+&p=1&ps=20> . Accessed 23 May 2018.

⁵¹ Mackey, *Done with Slavery*, 118.

lacked not only the legal capacity to negotiate in their own best interests, but also the social ability to make their wishes heard. This could combine in some cases with a lack of experience that, if they were separated from the networks of their families, meant that young people's vulnerabilities could leave them particularly open to exploitation and abuse. Young men, the sons of fur traders and Indigenous women, familiar with the work of the voyageur and old enough to perform manual labour, yet not old enough to bargain for a good wage in exchange for that labour, could be an attractive target for theft of labour in an industry that depended heavily on its workers.

Back home in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin and following the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, by 1823, George and Stephen Bonga, joined by their younger brother Jack, were trading for the American Fur Company in the area around Grand Marais on Lake Superior's North Shore.⁵² There is no evidence that Jack, who has been identified as born around 1815, but may have been older as he appears to have been trading by 1823, was ever sent away for an education, which is supported by the fact that census records suggest that he did not read or write in English.⁵³ Yet despite this, Jack was, like his brothers, successful in the trade. At home with their extended family, George and Stephen went on to careers that drew from and exceeded their father's own success. While this was certainly due in part to their English literacy, it also reflected their location in a complex Anishinawbe relational world.⁵⁴

While this brief discussion cannot identify the frequency with which children in the fur trade may have been exploited by their guardians and caretakers, it does show that, in the context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries fur trade, young men could be vulnerable to exploitation because of their lack of experience, combined with the legal and social restrictions placed on them by the British legal system. The intersection of race and class with age only

⁵² Bruce White, "Grand Portage National Monument Historic Documents Study," Turnstone Historical Research, 2004.

⁵³ Harper, "French Africans in Ojibwe Country," 50.

⁵⁴ Harper, "French Africans in Ojibwe Country," 138.

heightened this vulnerability. Because of this, the freedom and security of young people in the fur trade, who were constructed as minors in western legal systems, was heavily dependent on healthy family and kinship relationships. In cases where fur trade children were separated from family, that protection fell away leaving them a potential target for adults looking for opportunities to take advantage.

Fur trade slavery across the Canadian shield, over the prairies, and into the parklands

As has already been seen, chattel slavery was part of the fur trade as it moved over the Canadian shield, across the prairies, and into the Parklands. Between 1794 and 1795, North West Company clerk John McDonell,⁵⁵ located in the Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine Rivers region, recorded a number of incidents where Company employees bought and sold Indigenous people while engaging in the day-to-day business of fur trading. Born in Scotland in 1768, John McDonell, nicknamed “the Priest” for his strict observance of his Catholic faith, was the brother of Miles Macdonell, who became Governor of the Red River Settlement. John McDonell had immigrated to North America with his family in 1773. In her introduction to the published version of McDonell’s 1793 journal, Grace Lee Nute suggests that, at the age of twenty-five, this was probably his first trip west. The following entries come from his 1794 and 1795 journals.⁵⁶

[March 1794] Monday 3rd[.] Sansouci & two more men left by M^r Grant got their loads and went after him[.] Le Grand Diable, Le Pensionnaire Petit Plue &c came to the Fort & made a present the first of 21 Skins & a Buff. Robes; Le pensionnaire one of 8 Buff. Robes[.] Gave the former 7 Gall^s & the latter ½ a keg[.] Tranquille bought a Slave woman (i.e. taken in war) from the latter for two

⁵⁵ John McDonell’s name has appeared with a number of spellings in various sources. This research will use “McDonell,” consistent with the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, except where his name is spelled otherwise in primary or secondary sources used in a citation or a quote.

⁵⁶ Adrien Gabriel Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in western Canada, from Lake Superior to the Pacific, 1659-1895* (Toronto: Musson Book Co, 1910), 62; Pond, et al. *Five fur traders of the Northwest*, 63-64; Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 30.

Horses & twenty Pluës in Goods[.] Gave the Hunter six fioles to drink with them[.]

[March 1794] Tuesday 4th[.] Bought from the Petit Pluë Hugh McCracken's blue Horse for 20 Plues, He having got her from old Tranquille in past payment for a Slave woman of the Mandan Nation[.]

[April 1795] Wednesday 29th[.] Le fils du Grand Diable (Cato) went off & the Ruffien came in & made a present of 4 Buff. Robes, 2 wolves & 2 Bladd^s Grease[.] gave him two Gallons[.] Le frêne les deux Coeurs came to sell a young Slave Girl, which, on my refusal, Poitras purchased[.]⁵⁷

In his 1818 report “A General statement and report relative to the disturbances in the Indian territories of British North America,” W.B. Coltman noted that a man, “La Plonte,” [La Plante?] complained that in 1814 he had been sent to Montreal as punishment for “some slight services rendered Miles MacDonnell,” and “that during his absence [from Fort William] four horses and a cart were taken from him and that on the settlement of his account a female slave which he had been led to expect as a present was charged him at eight hundred livers,” suggesting that the North West Company itself may have been in the position to either give away or sell the woman.⁵⁸

From its earliest days on North American soil, the Hudson’s Bay Company was no stranger to slavery, either. Along the Bay, HBC men traded for Indigenous slaves, individuals they then put

⁵⁷ John Macdonell, Journal, Assiniboines and Rivière Qu'Appelle, 1793-1795. An electronic transcription. MFTP #0007 McGill University, In Pursuit of Adventure, view original documents and transcriptions at http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/toolbar_1.htm.

⁵⁸ LAC, MG19-E2, Volume/box number: 1, “W.B. Coltman A General statement and report relative to the disturbances in the Indian territories of British North America [textual record]. For inquiring into the offences committed in the said Indian territories and the circumstances attending the same,” See especially f 65-66, available at <http://data2.archives.ca/e/e447/e011163878-068-v8.jpg>; <http://data2.archives.ca/e/e447/e011163878-069-v8.jpg>; <http://data2.archives.ca/e/e447/e011163878-070-v8.jpg>

to work for the Company. Traders with familiar names, names like Henry Kelsey and James Knight, knowingly employed enslaved people purchased by the Company, and on at least two occasions sent enslaved Indigenous people to England with the full knowledge of the Governor and Committee in London. As the Company moved inland, others of their traders were also involved in the purchase of Indigenous people. In his *A journey from Prince of Wales's Fort, in Hudson's Bay, to the northern ocean*, Samuel Hearne recalled an incident from his time at Cumberland House, probably in the 1780s, "I desired some Indians that were going to war to bring me a young slave, which I intended to have brought up as a domestic," Hearne wrote. Despite his request, Hearne did not get a young woman. Nonetheless, his intention was clear.⁵⁹

In the spring of 1775 Matthew Cocking was on his way from York Factory intending to help Hearne establish Cumberland House. Nearing Red Deer River, in what is today the area around the Manitoba/Saskatchewan border, Cocking reported in his journal that "It seems there is much Business going forward at the Pedler Franceway's Settlement up Saskatchewan River, Ten Men and Two Indians having come from thence to fetch a supply of Goods from Blondow. " Barthélemi Blondeau was, as Chapin notes, well-connected. A cousin of Montreal merchant Maurice Blondeau, both men belonged to the extensive merchant and fur trading Blondeau family already discussed. Cocking continued, "Franceway has also it seems traded two Women as Slaves from a Pigogomew Indian Leader, those Women were not from the Snake Indians their Enimies but taken from some of the Yeach-i-thin-nu Indians who are in Friendship with them. The Pedlers have always traded all the Slaves the Indians would bring them, taking them down to Montreal and selling them there." Wallace notes that "'Franceway,' appears to have been outfitted by Isaac Todd and James McGill of Montreal," both of whom, as has been seen earlier, were involved in slavery in the east. J. B. Tyrrell identifies the "Yeach-i-thin-ne Indians" as Blackfoot,⁶⁰ however, as David Meyer and Dale Russell note, similar words, including

⁵⁹ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Price of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, and 1772* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1911), 267.

⁶⁰ HBCA B.239/a/72, f 36, York Factory Post Journal, 1774-1775, 5 April 1775; Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 3; Samuel Hearne, Philip Turnor, J. B. Tyrrell, and Peter Fidler, *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor*. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), 35. Franceway's identity has long been the subject of debate. Ruth Swan and Edward Jerome believe he may have been François Le Blancell aka Le Blanc, a name also used by François Jérôme. In 1767, Alexander Baxter of Montreal financed Le Blanc out of

“ayacheyinew,” (Faries) or “ayahciyiniw” (Wolvengrey) could mean, citing linguist Arok Wolvengrey, “Blackfoot; Slavey; enemy; stranger.”⁶¹

Not every slave traded inland was sent out to Montreal to be sold. In June of 1775, Cocking was approached by a slave who had managed to find freedom. “The Indians we left yesterday overtook Us. One of them brought a Letter directed to me which I shall preserve to be sent Home,” wrote Cocking. “He tells me that He is Yeach-i-Thinnu Indian; That He was traded when a Child from the Neheathaway [Cree] Indians by the French as a Slave and had served in their Inland trading Expeditions ever since,” Cocking explained, but “having had a Woman given Him by the Sassanew [probably Cree] Indians He had quitted the Pedlar Bruce and by the advice of the Leader who brought me up from the Factory, now arrived, He offers his Service to assist in the Company’s Inland Expeditions as an Indian.” The “Pedlar Bruce” was William Bruce, a man with a reputation for brutality, who had arrived in the area from the Mississippi in 1772, trading first at Basquia, then Fort Dauphin. In 1775-1776, Bruce would be off again to the region below Lake Winnipeg. He was reputed to move so often out of necessity, because of his “severe method of treating the Natives.”⁶²

Michilimackinac to travel to Fort Dauphin and Portage La Prairie, about the same time that Franceway appeared in the region. Franceway was also known as Saswe, Shash, (or other variations). David Chapin notes that Franceway and some of his contemporaries who had extensive fur trade history and connections were important sources of information for the British traders who began to travel inland after 1760. Wallace believes Franceway may have been one of La Vérendrye’s men, as he had been in the trade for thirty years by the time Cocking wrote about him in the 1770s. Ruth Swan, Edward A. Jerome, “Indigenous Knowledge, Literacy and Research on Métissage and Métis Origins on the Saskatchewan River: The Case of the Jerome Family,” in *The western Métis: profile of a people*, Patric Douaud, ed. (Regina: University of Regina, Canadian Plains Research Center, 2007) 31-53, 41-48; David Chapin, *Freshwater Passages: The Trade and Travels of Peter Pond* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 121, 134; W. Stewart Wallace, *The Pedlars from Quebec: And Other Papers on the Nor’ Westers* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954), 6.

⁶¹ David Meyer and Dale Russell, “So Fine and Pleasant, Beyond Description’: The Lands and Lives of the Pegogamaw Crees.” *Plains Anthropologist* 49, no. 191 (2004): 217-52, 247. Accessed January 3, 2021.

⁶² HBCA B.239/a/72, f 17, f 44 – f 44d, York Factory Post Journal, 1774-1775, 10 June 1775; Dale Russell, “Eighteenth Century Western Cree and Their Neighbours,” MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, 1990, 264-265. Cocking notes

Cocking's remarks about his concerns over taking this man on suggest that he had performed linguistic and diplomatic work for his former owners, "from Use He is able to undergo great Fatigue, but cannot build Canoes," Cocking wrote, but he doubted the man would be a great deal of help in those areas because of his status. "This Man may serve very well for the Purpose, He Now offers Himself; But as to serving as an Interpreter as mentioned in his Letter of recommendation I do not think the Company are in want of such," Cocking continued. "And as to the Interest amongst the Natives, it is most likely to be supposed a Yeachithinnu Slave can have but little," he concluded.⁶³

Records of fur traders buying and selling slaves were not limited to the Cumberland House region. In November 1801, Peter Fidler wrote in his Fort Chipewyan fur trade post journal: "6th Friday Traded a Slave girl ab^t 6 years old belon^g to Snake Indian parents for 7 MB on the Country Standard; 7th Saturday They came again for the Slave girl traded yesterday & delivered her up."⁶⁴ On the 18th of February 1802 Fidler wrote "Traded a Snake Young woman from the Fall Indians –" Then on the 20th "The Fall Ind took the Slave woman back."⁶⁵ In the back of Fidler's journal, under "Indian Debt," he noted "Gave for a Slave girl ab^t 5 or 6 Years old to Na too pe a Blauk First Chief Nov. 5. 1801," followed by a list of trade goods. Lower down on the page, he wrote "1802 Feby 17 Gave for a Slave young Woman abt. 19, a Snake Ind. Taken by

earlier in his journal that "Bruce" was the same man who had been at Basquia (present-day The Pas, MB) in 1773. Tyrrell quotes Cocking from his 1773 journal, and identifies "Bruce" as William Bruce, who had been trading on the Mississippi, but had had to leave after he had killed an Indigenous person there. In the winter of 1774-1775, Bruce had travelled to the Winnipegosis region. Hearne, Turnor, Tyrrell, and Fidler, *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor*, 16 – 17. Wallace indicates Bruce was trading in Michigan in 1763, Cocking and others noted him as violent. Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 428. Duckworth notes that Bruce disappears from surviving fur trade records around 1781, possibly having died in the smallpox epidemic that raged through the region. Duckworth, *Friends, Foes, and Furs*, 5. Chapin, *Freshwater Passages*, 144-145.

⁶³ HBCA B.239/a/72, f 17, f 44 – f 44d, York Factory Post Journal, 1774-1775, 10 June 1775.

⁶⁴ HBCA, B.39/a/2, f 6, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 1801-1803.

⁶⁵ HBCA B.39/a/2, f 16, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 1801-1803.

the Crow mountain Inds. In the Summer & given to the Ne heit thin n ache be,” again followed by a list of trade items.⁶⁶

As has already been discussed in the case of the Bonga family, identifying freedom and unfreedom in fur trade records can be difficult. The life of Joseph Lewis, aka Levi Johnson is a case in point. Lewis was a man described as “Mulatto,” “Black,” and “Negro” in early records. By the 1870s, as Manitoba became part of Canada, his descendants would describe him as “African.” Not much is known about Lewis before he joined the Hudson’s Bay Company, his employment records indicate that he was born around 1772, and was from Manchester, New England.⁶⁷ In 1795, Lewis had travelled to Basquia (The Pas, in present day Manitoba) under his master, Francois Beaubien, one of a group of fur traders referred to as the “Southmen.” Duckworth, in his article “The Last Coureurs du Bois,” identifies Beaubien as a member of the Trottier DesRivières family, who, as shown earlier, were involved in both the fur trade and slavery in the east. As Duckworth notes, there is also a family and possible business connection between this line of the Trottier family and James McGill (see earlier for a discussion of McGill’s connections to fur trade and slavery), as McGill married Amable Trottier DesRivières’ widow.⁶⁸ Duckworth believes that this Francois Beaubien was probably the son of Eustace

⁶⁶ HBCA B.39/a/2, f 96, Fort Chipewayn Journal, 1801-1803.

⁶⁷ See Appendix A, Description of Joseph Lewis in Fur Trade Records, for some of these names and their sources. Alice Johnson also notes his being called a “Canadian of Colour,” however research to date has not revealed a source for this reference. Alice M. Johnson, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1800; Chesterfield House 1800-1802* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967), 200, see especially, fn 1 on this page. HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Lewis, Margaret or Lewes,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/l/lewis_margaret.pdf. Accessed on 16 December 2020.

⁶⁸ A letter which will be discussed later identifies Lewis’ master as “Beaubien,” Alice Johnson identifies him as Francois Beaubien, and identification with which Harry Duckworth concurs (personal communication, 13 August, 2020). Harry Duckworth, “The Last Coureurs du Bois.” *The Beaver*, Spring 1984, see especially p. 9 ff.; Beaubien had wintered at a place known as the Grand Rapid, “about fifteen miles above Brandon House by land,” leaving in April of 1794, it is not clear whether Lewis would have been with him at that time or not. Duckworth, “The Last Coureurs du Bois,” 10. Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, see especially 423-424; Raymond Dumais, « TROTTIER DESRIVIÈRES BEAUBIEN, EUSTACHE-IGNACE », dans *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*, vol. 5, Université Laval/University of

Ignace, who Trudel indicates owned at least one slave, Marie, an Indigenous woman who was baptized in 1756 at the age of 17 or 18 years, and died in Montreal in 1784, at the age of 50. Beaubien was a formidable figure, in one of his journals, fur trader George Nelson related the story of “Beaubien’s Decharge” on the Winnipeg River somewhere between Lac du Bonnet and Fort Alexander:

About the year '98 or '99 Monr. Beaubien from the easy apparent motion of the water insisted & made his Guide run it absolutely against his will. The consequence was as foreseen, & told him by the Guide that the crooked tops of the swells would either fill their canoes or the eddy, which is very large & violent, with the whirlpools in it, would upset, ore engulf, i.e. suck them down, several people were drowned, & much property lost. Not half a mile below is another terrible fally, & if the most of them did not go in, it was owing to the eddy, that kept them turning round, 'till one Canoe, that had passed safe, gathered them up.⁶⁹

So, it cannot seem too much of a surprise that, in December 1795, Lewis approached the Hudson’s Bay Company, having left his master over a disagreement, and saying somewhat enigmatically, that he had “no contract.” By the end of May 1796, Lewis was working for the Company.⁷⁰

In the fall of 1795, the North West Company’s Simon McTavish had begun pursuing a policy aimed at consolidating the fur trade in the region through a combination of partnership mergers and buying up opposition companies and independent traders that eventually included Lewis’ master. In the summer of 1796, the North West Company was able to make a deal with Beaubien and his business partner Laviolette as they passed Grand Portage on their way out of the fur trade

Toronto, 2003– , consulté le 6 oct. 2020,
http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/trottier_desrivieres_beaubien_eustache_ignace_5F.html.

⁶⁹ Duckworth, *Friends, Foes, and Furs*, 340-341.

⁷⁰ Johnson, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, 200; HBCA B.49/a/27a, f 7-7d, Cumberland House Journal, 1795-1796, George Sutherland, 17 December 1795, George Sutherland to Mr. Bird 22 December 1795; HBCA B49/a/27B, Cumberland House Post Journal, 1796- 1797; HBCA B.49/a/27B, f.3d, Cumberland House Journal, P. Fidler, 31 May 1796.

country. Under their agreement, the North West Company bought out the two, and arranged to send Laviolette to Pembina. The partners having somehow fallen out, Beaubien was free, and in 1798, was one of the original signatories to the XY Company agreement. Laviolette's eastern supplier was Étienne Champion, also involved in slave ownership, and discussed earlier. Beaubien appears to have continued on apart from the North West Company.⁷¹ In June of 1796, "Messrs. [Angus] Shaw, [James the younger] Finlay, and [William?] McKay wrote from the Grand Rapids to James Sutherland, who was master at Brandon House, that they had taken two men who had deserted the HBC to the Grand Rapids, as these men would have otherwise been taken by Beaubien in retaliation for the loss of "his Negro."⁷²

James Sutherland, who was probably born in the early 1750s in Orkney, had begun his career with the HBC at Fort Prince of Wales in 1770 as a tailor. He returned to England in 1775 over a wage dispute but was back in North America in 1777. Willing and able to travel inland at a time when the Company was looking to expand away from the Bay, Sutherland rose in the ranks until, in 1796, he was placed in charge of Brandon House. His tenure there was short lived, however, he died at his post on the 29th of April 1797. But during the time he was at Brandon, as will be seen later in the story of John Easter, Sutherland's journals and correspondence show that he was no stranger to the practice of chattel slavery on the plains.⁷³

⁷¹ Duckworth, "*The Last Coureurs du Bois*," 11-12.

⁷² If Lewis had been enslaved by Beaubien, he would, of course, not have had a contract. On the other hand, not every person in fur trade country had contracts, especially if they had continued on working in the west after their original contract had expired. HBCA B.239/b/57, f.14d, ff, York Factory Correspondence Book, 1795 -1796, Copy of a letter from Messers Shaw, Finlay, and McKay to Mr. Sutherland; Duckworth, "*The Last Coureurs du Bois*," 11-12. Beaubien had died before the second agreement signed in 1802. The fact that McKay had taken and was holding 2 other men suggests the degree of unfreedom even indentured servants could experience. Martin Kavanagh identifies "The Grand Rapids" as "Curries Landing," today. *The Assiniboine Basin: A Social Study of Discovery, Exploration, and Settlement* (Winnipeg: Printed by Public Press, 1946), 98.

⁷³ Shirlee Anne Smith, "SUTHERLAND, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 23, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sutherland_james_4E.html; HBCA Biographical Sheets, "Sutherland, James."

Fur traders like Sutherland brought their own connections to and beliefs about race and unfreedom with them as they travelled and traded inland. This was certainly the case for the traders involved in trying to recover Lewis. Shaw and his relationship with the Bonga children have already been discussed. The James Finlay mentioned was the son of James Finlay Sr., who, as has already been seen, had been connected to the fur trade and with slavery in the east at least from 1762. James Finlay Sr. had wintered in the region in 1768 -1769, establishing Finlay's House near present-day Nipawin, SK. On their way back to Montreal in 1769 his group fell so low on provisions that they had trouble making it out of the fur trade country. 1769 was also the year that Isaac Todd described six slaves Finley Sr. had sold to McBeath as "such starved miserable looking Creatures I w^d have nothing to say to them," suggesting that they may well have been brought out by Finlay and his men in that trip.⁷⁴ James Finlay Sr.'s purchase of a woman in 1783, and subsequent sale of her in 1788, shows that he was still engaged in slavery after his time wintering in the West. By 1792, the younger James Finlay, who had grown up in this culture of slave ownership, the James Finlay involved in attempting to recover Lewis from the HBC was himself trading on the North Saskatchewan.⁷⁵

As an HBC employee, Joseph Lewis had to weave his way through this tangled web of fur trade and slavery. In 1796, the Hudson's Bay Company's "Cumberland House lists of servants" included Joseph Lewis, describing him as "from Canada has left his Canadian master and is gone down steersman to York Factory to engage in your Honours Service, he speaks tolerable good English and came to the House the last day of May." Significantly, this description noted that "he is a black but whether he was a Slave or a hired servant I do not know." This description of Lewis presses the point that, even in the period, one of Lewis' employers was not certain whether Lewis, who he could say was definitely "black," was "Slave or a hired servant." "Of

⁷⁴ Harry Duckworth, unpublished biography, "Finlay, James." In the possession of the author.

⁷⁵ James Nevin Wallace, *The wintering partners on Peace River, from the earliest records to the union in 1821: With a summary of the Dunvegan Journal, 1806* (Ottawa: Thorburn & Abbot, 1929), 39; Riddell, *The Slave in Canada*, 33; Chapin, *Freshwater Passages*, 121.

how fare he may be Depended upon I will not venture to say, but by what I have heard since he embarked he is very much in Debt,” the notation concluded.⁷⁶

That being Black and a slave in the fur trade country was possible was taken as a given by the author of the Cumberland House list, although not everyone at this point necessarily agreed in principle with this possibility. On the 10th of May 1797, Angus Shaw wrote to Joseph Colen from Fort Augustus that he was holding onto an HBC man, “Ward,” until “Duroche & the Negro are restored by you.” On the 20th of July Colen responded: “you well know this Man was a deserter from one of those interlopers when I engaged him & it cannot be supposed that altho you have purchased the Goods of those Traders that this man also is your property. I hope you do not consider the human Species as articles of Traffic. especially in this free Country humanity forbids it.”⁷⁷ It is difficult to know how typical Colen’s position was within the HBC. He was unusual in terms of HBC officers in that he maintained an extensive library at York Factory of over 1400 books. Probably owing in large part to conflict he had with another HBC officer, William Tomison, who spent much of his time inland, Colen was recalled by the London Committee in 1798 and did not return to Hudson Bay.⁷⁸

But while Colen’s tenure in the fur trade was coming to an end, Lewis continued on with the HBC. On the 20th of August 1797, Donald McKay, travelling through Jack River, noted Lewis, writing in his journal that he had seen “five men & a Negro man from Canada.”⁷⁹ Lewis went on

⁷⁶ HBCA B.49/f/2, f 5 Cumberland House lists of servants, 1796, “Lewis, Joseph.” The remark about Lewis’ debt may have been what would today be labelled “fake news,” as Lewis proved himself an excellent employee and left his family a legacy at his death. It is possible that this list was written by Matthew Cocking, or perhaps William Tomison, the document itself does not identify an author.

⁷⁷ HBCA B.239/b/59, f 34 York Factory Correspondence, 1796-1797, 20 July 1797, from J.C. [Joseph Colen?] to Mr Shaw; HBCA B.239/b/59, f 26, York Factory Correspondence, 1796-1797, from A.[ngus] Shaw to J.C. [Joseph Colen?] Fort Augustus 10th May 97; HBCA B.49/f/2, f 5 Cumberland House lists of servants, 1796, “Lewis, Joseph.”

⁷⁸ Shirlee Anne Smith, “COLEN, JOSEPH,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/colen_joseph_5E.html.

⁷⁹ HBCA B. 3/a/100, f 14d, Albany Post Journal, 1796-1798, Donald McKay, 20 August 1797.

to have a respected career with the Hudson's Bay Company, travelling into uncharted and often dangerous situations and remaining a loyal servant to the Company. He travelled with Peter Fidler to Meadow Lake and Greenwich House, and probably to Lesser Slave Lake River. He also accompanied Joseph Howse to Chesterfield House, and in his travel over the Rocky Mountains. Around 1814 Lewis made the shift from tripman to freeman, afterward remaining in the area of the HBC's Saskatchewan department. At some point, perhaps around 1806 judging by his children's ages, he entered into a relationship with an Indigenous woman who died before 1820 when Lewis was reported killed by members of the Blackfoot.⁸⁰ Lewis left three children, Margaret and Polly [probably aka Mary], and James, who eventually became administrator of his father's estate.⁸¹ All three children were baptized at Red River 13 February, 1827,⁸² where Mary Lewis attended the Reverend William Cockran's school in the late 1820s or early 1830s. In a letter dated 29 July 1830, Cockran included her in a list of students, identifying her as "American." Margaret Lewis was identified as a "Negro Half-Breed" in the HBCA copy of the register of marriages at Red River, however, this notation does not appear in the copy held by the Anglican Archives. Her sister Mary's 1831 marriage record does not mention race at all.⁸³

Conclusions

Although the same patterns of gaps and absence that make it difficult to track the lives of enslaved people generally were also present in fur trade record keeping, it is still possible to see

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, 200; HBCA A.6/19, f 228, 2 January 1822, William Smith to James Bird, re Joseph Lewis deceased.

⁸¹ HBCA, A.6/21, f 212. HBCA A.44/2, f 24, 2 November 1826; HBCA A.36/8, f 232; HBCA A.6/21, f 299, William Smith to George Simpson, 14 February 1828, the value of Lewis' estate, Smith stated to be 212.8. pounds. HBCA A.36/8, f 232, London 24 October 1826, describes Lewis as a widower at the time of his death. HBCA A.6/19, f 22[8]; HBCA A.16/44, f.90, 164, 165; E.4/1, f 295d [Mary buried RRS 6 April, 1832, age 24 years]; HBCA Church of England Baptisms, E.4/1a, f 63d. Louis, James; Louis, Margaret; Louis, Poly.

⁸² HBCA, Church of England Baptisms, E.4/1a, f 63d, Louis, James; Louis, Margaret; Louis, Poly.

⁸³ HBCA Biographical Sheet: "Lewis, Margaret Lewes"; Johnson, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence*, 200.; Church Missionary Society, Mission Book, North-West Canada, 1822-1834, University of Birmingham Library, digitized by Adam Matthew Digital, Letter, Rev William Cockran to the Secretaries, Grand Rapids, Red River Settlement, July 29th 1830, f 405; HBCA E.4/1b f. 230, 6 January 1831, marriage Mary Lewes, John Batish Sherdau.

how chattel slavery extended its reach into the heart of the continent. The same attitudes to chattel slavery that existed in the Imperial world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries more generally travelled throughout the fur trade country along the webs of relationships that extended out from Montreal and the “pedlars” of the eastern fur trade, and from Hudson Bay and the HBC’s connections back to Britain. Chattel slavery, alongside other forms of unfreedom, traced out along these webs, might be encountered any place that fur traders travelled, reflecting the racialized constructions of freedom and unfreedom they were familiar with. From north to south, and from east to west, as will be seen in the next chapter, these patterns held true from the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth.

Chapter Three: “Ye Comp^{ies} Slaves:”¹ Slavery in Northern North America under the Hudson’s Bay Company

By the time Joseph Lewis’ status as free or enslaved had come under discussion in the 1790s fur trade, the HBC had been quietly involved in slavery in North America for over a hundred years. This is perhaps not surprising given the fact that the HBC, its London Committee, and by extension the territories that became known as “Rupert’s Land” in the HBC’s charter were all part of, and connected to, a wider empire that included the practice of chattel slavery. From its earliest years trading along Hudson Bay, the Company had purchased and been given slaves, individuals they put to work as guides, translators, diplomats, and labourers. In turn, the goods the Company traded for these people, and the relationships their transfers cemented intervened in the balance of power and the political landscape of the region.

The HBC and Imperial Narratives of Benevolence

In keeping with a narrative that served both Company and Imperial ambitions by framing their interactions with Indigenous people as co-operative and mutually beneficial, there was little incentive to publicize the Company’s involvement with slavery in Northern North America.² This trend has continued into today. As noted earlier, despite a significant interest in the fur trade generally, and the HBC in particular, what little has been written about slavery in the context of the HBC fur trade has tended to compliment larger national narratives that emphasize freedom and redemption. HBC officer John Newton is a case in point, having been the father of the

¹ HBCA B.239/b/1, f 25d, York Factory Correspondence Books, 1718-1720, Henry Kelsey to T. McCleish Jr, 18 January 1720.

² David Chan Smith, "The Hudson's Bay Company, Social Legitimacy, and the Political Economy of Eighteenth-Century Empire." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2018): 71-108, 108.

famous John Newton, reformed slave ship captain and writer of the song “Amazing Grace.”³ The well-known narrative constructed around the story of Thanadelthur is a particularly interesting example of this trend. During the last decades of the twentieth century, a woman identified as “Thanadelthur,” as Patricia McCormack notes, “moved from a position of relative obscurity to a prominent place as a Canadian iconographic equivalent to the better known Pocahontas and Sacagawea.”⁴ This rise to prominence in the Canadian narrative consciousness began when Alice Johnson identified the woman we know today as Thanadelthur as being the person referred to as the “slave woman” by HBC officer James Knight in his HBC journals, when Johnson co-edited, as McCormack writes, “the Hudson’s Bay Record Society volume, *Letters from Hudson Bay 1703-40*.” In this volume, Johnson included a biography of “the slave woman,” which McCormack believes Johnson probably wrote herself, adding “a brief note, almost an afterthought: that among the Chipewyans, the ‘Slave Woman’ was remembered as ‘Than’a delthur’ or ‘marten shake,’” and crediting a story recounted by Edward Curtis that he based on conversations he had had with Dene in the Cold Lake, Alberta area as the source for the name. “Just four years later,” writes McCormack, “G. E. Thorman used an Anglicized version of this Chipewyan name as the title of the biography he wrote for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Thus, it was between 1952 and 1965 that Thanadelthur acquired the name by which she is commonly known today. The name was popularized in Sylvia Van Kirk’s important 1974 article in *The Beaver*.”⁵

Framed as a smart, strong woman who exercised agency and leadership, a woman who had, through her wits and perseverance, escaped slavery, Thanadelthur’s story fit well with feminist historiography in the period. Thanadelthur’s tale of escape from slavery to safety at a fur trade fort also placed her story alongside narratives that foreground Canada’s part in the Underground Railroad. Positioning even pre-Canada as a place of refuge and redemption for escaped slaves,

³ Joan Craig, “NEWTON, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 6, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/newton_john_3E.html.

⁴ Patricia McCormack, “Visioning Thanadelthur: Shaping a Canadian Icon,” *Manitoba History*, 55 (2007), 2-6, 2.

⁵ McCormack, “Visioning Thanadelthur,” 2-6, 4.

the narrative constructed around Thanadelthur emphasized her former slave status while carefully skirting the fact that Thanadelthur's rescuer, James Knight, was personally involved in the buying, selling, and ownership of slaves, both on behalf of the Company and for himself.

Despite the similarities between the story of Thanádēlthūr that Curtis recounted and Knight's story of "the slave woman," it is not entirely certain that the woman, Thanádēlthūr, named in the story Curtis recorded in the 1920s was the woman Knight referred to as "the slave woman." The story Curtis that recounted, based on conversations he had had with the Dene who were living around the Cold Lake, Alberta area at the time, begins before contact. At this time, the Dene told Curtis, the "Chipewyan" always did well in battle with the Cree. But with the arrival of the HBC, the Cree who lived near the Company's posts gained a clear advantage in their exchanges with their enemies because of their access to guns. Sometimes, when they were successful in battle, the Cree would capture a young woman from the Chippewyans and take her with them.⁶ Following one such battle, Thanádēlthūr was captured by the Cree and taken by a "Cree husband." Together they travelled a great distance, then one day he left her. In awhile he returned with things that Thanádēlthūr had never heard of or seen before. The same thing happened the following year. The year after that, Thanádēlthūr cautiously followed the man and his travelling companion, and watched as the men seemed to disappear into a rock. Coming closer to see where they had gone, Thanádēlthūr found that the men had entered a house.⁷

As Thanádēlthūr peered in through a window in the building, the story continues, "the factor saw her through the glass, opened the door and called her in." When the factor asked her who she was, and how large a people she came from, Thanádēlthūr answered in Cree that "they were many." The factor asked: "Are they good-looking people?" Thanádēlthūr replied: "You see me. Do I look bad?" "No, you look better than these people," answered the factor, indicating the men she had come with. "Well, that is how my people look," she told him. The factor turned on the two men saying: "You have been telling me that the people with whom you have

⁶ Edward S. Curtis and Frederick Webb Hodge. *The North American Indian: Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States, the Dominion of Canada, and Alaska*. New York: Johnson, 1970, 8.

⁷ Edward and Hodge. *The North American Indian*, 9.

been fighting are bad-looking people, that they are like devils: and that is why you wanted to kill them.” The men had become anxious when Thanádělthür had arrived. Their discomfort only grew when the factor said: “I think you are liars.” The factor paid the men for their furs and for Thanádělthür, and she moved into the fort. Over the winter the factor asked Thanádělthür if she could find her way back to her own country. “Of course I know my own country,” she replied.⁸

At the factor’s request, Thanádělthür set out with some of his men. As the group came closer to her home country, Thanádělthür went ahead of the HBC men, to avoid alarming anyone they might meet along the way. As she was travelling on her own, Thanádělthür met up with a man and explained what had happened, saying that “she was bringing the White Flesh to trade with her people,” and that he should go home and let everyone know she and the HBC party would be “at the lake.” Although some of Thanádělthür’s people hid, others came to the camp. There Thanádělthür stood on a platform, so “her people could see her and have confidence. When she beheld her people coming, she sang with joy.” Then the factor gave gifts, including guns, and explained the standard of trade for various items to the assembled group. After demonstrating how to use the guns and other unfamiliar tools, Thanádělthür and the factor went back to the fort.⁹

As will be seen, Knight not only gave shelter to the escaped “slave woman” most commonly associated with the name Thanadelthur, he also purchased other Indigenous women whom he hoped would be able to broker peaceful relationships and encourage trade between their people and the HBC. Because of this, it is difficult to know with certainty whether “the slave woman” in Knight’s journals was the Thanádělthür in the story shared with Curtis. But whether the Thanádělthür in the story recounted by Curtis was “the slave woman” in James Knight’s narrative or not, what has changed between the story recounted by Curtis and the story of Thanadelthur that is currently told is significant, suggesting the ways that the different narrative lenses used to view it have altered the story. In the narrative given to Curtis by the Dene, Thanádělthür was not only a smart, strong woman, she was a smart strong woman who was

⁸ Curtis and Hodge. *The North American Indian*, 8-9.

⁹ Curtis and Hodge. *The North American Indian*, 9.

aware of, and working for, her own community's interests. That these interests coincided with those of the HBC was, perhaps fortunate, but it was not at all the focus of the story.

Power, politics, and slavery along the Bay

As in other regions, the introduction of chattel slavery by fur traders along Hudson Bay was not neutral. In purchasing enslaved people, fur traders disrupted the local political landscape in ways that changed power balances and could support violent interactions. One of the earliest surviving records of HBC activity around Hudson Bay, "The York Factory General Account Book" for 1688-1689 documents the Company's payment of "one short Eng^{sh} Gun given for a slave man, One Long: Eng: Gun given for a woman."¹⁰ The importance of this transaction is not only that it documents the purchase of enslaved people by the Company. The fact that the payment for these people was in guns is significant.

In her essay "'Slaves' and Slave Raiding on the Northern Plains and Rupert's Land," Alice Beck Kehoe distinguishes the practices of warfare from slave raiding, in which the goal was to acquire slaves rather than to defeat an enemy. In her discussion, Kehoe points out that Indigenous slave raiding could bring material benefits to the Indigenous communities who acquired slaves from the members of other groups, not least of which was that the labour of enslaved people could enhance the transportation and production of goods and food, including hides and pemmican. This could lead to a marketable surplus production, which could then be sold on to other Indigenous people or, during the fur trade, to "pemmican posts." Above all, argues Kehoe, "labour value long had been the principal stimulus to slave raiding and maintenance on the Northern Plains and Rupert's Land."¹¹

The picture among the people who lived around Hudson Bay and to its north was distinctly different. In these areas, attacks on communities and groups, often based on revenge, tended to

¹⁰ York Factory was established in 1784. HBCA Post History, available at http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/PAM_AUTHORITY/AUTH_DESC_DET_REP/SISN%20629?sessionsearch. Accessed 11 December 2020. HBCA B.239/d/1, f 13, York Factory general account book, 1688-1689; Other references to a "Slave Boy" appear in this, the earliest surviving account book from York factory. His status will be discussed later.

¹¹ Kehoe, "'Slaves' and Slave Raiding," 39.

be swift and sudden, leaving behind few or no survivors. Discussing slave raids undertaken by the Cree in the areas around Moose Factory and Albany, Toby Morantz and Daniel Francis state that the reasons for their raids to the region around Richmond Gulf, while not entirely clear, do not appear to have been economically motivated. As Roland Bohr notes, the Cree themselves explained them as based in concerns about the harm their enemies were doing to them through spiritual attacks, and Cree attempts to contain this harm. In this context, with the arrival of fur traders along the Bay, access to firearms and ammunition gave a definite advantage to those, mostly the Cree who lived in the areas near HBC posts, who could acquire and maintain European weapons.¹²

The Cree, outfitted with firearms and ammunition, presented a formidable psychological as well as physical barrier to any of the people further north who might otherwise have wanted to trade with the Company and to get firearms of their own. As Bohr notes, the muskets supplied by the HBC “could have a deadly effect, especially in confrontations with those who did not have them. ... Indigenous combatants were recorded having used these weapons at very close range, as an initial ‘shock artillery’ and then switching to traditional distance weapons, and/or hand-to-hand combat. This seems to have been highly effective in many instances.” Bohr notes that, while Cree warfare against the Inuit and Dene could often come close to decimating the enemy, in some cases women were taken captive to “carry booty and to cook and sew on the journey home.” Some of these people may have died or been killed on the way, while others may have ended up living with their captors. Some managed to escape. “During the eighteenth century,” writes Bohr, “Cree people took Inuit and Déné captives, mostly young women and small boys, and sold them to fur traders to work at posts...or integrated them into their community.” In addition to the direct exchange of enslaved people for weapons or other goods that might provide a significant advantage in warfare, Victor Lytwyn suggests that there may have been a range of reasons why the Cree might have taken captives including prestige, cementing alliances with other groups, replacing community members lost through illness or in combat, and giving

¹²K. G. Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay 1703-40*. K.G. Davies, ed. Assisted by A.M. Johnson, Introduction by Richard Glover (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), 1. Francis and Morantz. *Partners in Furs*, 76-77; Bohr, *Gifts from the Thunder Beings*, 237-238, 245, 246 , Bohr, personal communication, 4 October 2020.

enslaved people as part of gift exchanges used to strengthen relationships and alliances with traders, much in the same vein as Rushforth discusses in his analysis of slavery in the fur trade further east and south.¹³

The response of the HBC to Cree sorties described as “Esquimaux hunts” was confusing. On the one hand, framing this warfare as immoral and harming the trade, the Company urged its employees at the posts to discourage such activities. On the other hand, traders at the posts knowingly outfitted groups mounting such attacks.¹⁴ Richard Glover, in the introduction to *Letters from Hudson Bay* writes that “the Company’s trade goods had overturned the balance of power, on which, in the virgin forests of the north as well as elsewhere, peace depended. Tribes who acquired guns gained a crippling advantage over those who had no better weapon than the bow.” Discussing James Knight’s decision to mount trade expeditions aimed at balancing power by establishing trade with the Dene and thus supplying them with weapons, Glover notes that “Knight was able to secure Chipewyan slave women whom the musket-armed Crees had brought home as trophies from their forays against the hapless Chipewyans.”¹⁵ Quantifying the implications of the interventions the fur traders made into the region is beyond reach. Just as Albert Hurtado notes in his essay on plains slavery, in the fur trade of Hudson Bay, “There are no statistical sources that tell how many enslaved Indians were sold to white traders or to Indians.” Yet, when read alongside Blackhawk’s analysis of the violent effects colonial interventions exerted on existing Indigenous social and political structures in *Violence over the Land*, the implications of trading slaves for firearms and ammunition especially, but also for anything that supported prestige and alliances, or that might otherwise outfit or support warfare, becomes apparent.¹⁶

¹³ Francis and Morantz. *Partners in Furs*, 76-77.

¹⁴ Francis and Morantz, *Partners in Furs*, 75-77, 139; Roland Bohr, personal communication, 4 October 2020; Lytwyn, *Muskegowuck Athinuwick*, 59- 61.

¹⁵ Davies, et. al., *Letters from Hudson Bay 1703-40*, 1.

¹⁶ Albert L. Hurtado, “When Strangers Met, Sex and Gender on Three Frontiers” in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women's West*, Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Hodge Armitage, eds. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 122-142,132.

Slave, Slavey, and Slavery: More linguistic challenges

Very much like the issues historians including Whitfield have encountered in researching slavery, records relating to slavery around Hudson Bay after contact are far from frank or unambiguous. As already discussed, while the word “slave” appears fairly regularly in the fur trade records of the region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it can have multiple possible meanings. Even in cases where there is fairly strong evidence of an unfree relationship, some anthropologists and historians have argued for a softer or more limited sort of understanding of this kind of unfreedom than that associated with chattel slavery. This is the case with Renée Fossett’s discussion of two Indigenous “slave boys,” in her book *In Order to Live Untroubled: Inuit in the Central Arctic, 1550 to 1940*, where she writes that “It is not clear whether Andrew and Daniel were Chipewyan or Cree, and although they were referred to as “slaves,” their status with the Hudson’s Bay Company is as mysterious as their ethnicity.”¹⁷ Unpacking and contextualizing the archival references to these two young men offers a useful window into both the records and historiography that surrounds chattel slavery along the Bay.

References to the two “slaves boys,” whom Henry Kelsey called “Andrew” and “Daniel” in his records are not the first time Kelsey was connected with enslaved people. James G.E. Smith identifies one of the members of Kelsey’s 1689 journey inland as one of the slaves the Company had acquired through trade.¹⁸ The York Factory accounts book for the years 1688-1689, the same year that the HBC traded guns for a slave man and slave woman, shows, under expenses, a list of items that were “spared to y^e Slave boy for his encouragement in going to [sauverne? Possibly “Severn?”] & to y^e Norward.”¹⁹ In his *A Journal of a voyage & Journey undertaken by Henry Kelsey through Gods assistance to discover & bring to a Commerce the Naywatame poets*

¹⁷ Renée Fossett, *In Order to Live Untroubled: Inuit in the Central Arctic, 1550 to 1940* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 93.

¹⁸ In an article in *Ethnohistory*, James G.E. Smith does identify this “slave boy” as enslaved. “Chipewyan, Cree and Inuit Relations West of Hudson Bay, 1714-1955,” *Ethnohistory*, Spring, 1981, 28:2, 133-156, 137.

¹⁹ HBCA B.239/d/1, 13, 13d, York Factory Account Book, 1688 – 1689.

in Anno 1691, Kelsey writes about travelling with “a little slave boy.”²⁰ As in earlier account records, in the York Factory accounts for 1689-1690, there is no indication of any “slave boy” as having his own account as an employee, however, under the category of “expenses,” an entry indicates goods that were “spared” to “y^e slave boy at severall times.” This entry appears directly above an entry itemizing goods “spared” to Kelsey for his trip, and below entries for items “spared” for particular Company apprentices. Also in this part of the ledger are entries of items “expended” by the factory for “useful occasions,” and items presented & given to [illegible] Ind^s . & our two slaves.”²¹ These entries leave more questions than they answer. It seems clear that the “slave boy” was not under contract with the Company, and that he was not considered an apprentice, as the items provided to apprentices, presumably under the HBC’s responsibilities to them, are identified as such. Two of the possibilities this ledger does suggest are that the “slave boy” was, in fact, a slave of the Company, or that he was a person from one of the groups referred to by fur traders as Slaves, perhaps from a Dene group. Whether he was free or enslaved is not, in these entries, entirely clear.

The case of “Andrew” and “Daniel” is less ambiguous. As part of the Company’s efforts to open trade with the Inuit and Dene, Kelsey planned to send “two Slave Boys” with Captain Hancock who would exchange these two for two Inuit, who would then be able to help Hancock open up trade with other Inuit in the area. In Hancock’s sailing orders, Kelsey describes these “two Slave Boys” as “Two of y^e Comp^{ies} Slaves.” In a later letter to Thomas Macleish [or Macklish], Kelsey notes that Hancock is to “bring the Companies Slaves Back.”²² In Kelsey’s own words, he told the Company “I changed two of your slaves for 2 Eskemoes in order to get interpreters of their Language.” On the 2nd of July 1720, Kelsey wrote that Hancock was to have returned the two Inuit who had been exchanged for “Andrew” and “Daniel” to their own people, “& to bring your

²⁰ *Three Hundred Prairie Years: Henry Kelsey's "Inland Country of Good Report"* (University of Regina. Canadian Plains Research Center, 1993), 221.

²¹ HBCA B.239/d/2, f 4d – 5, York Factory Account Book, 1689-1690.

²² HBCA B.239/b/1, f 17, 25d, York Factory Correspondence, 1718 – 1720. F 17: Council held at York Fort: “taking two Slave Boys with him;” f 25d, 18 January 1720, Sailing Orders to Hancock: “Two of y^e Comp^{ies} Slaves”: Changed Two of ye Compies Slaves for Two of those Countrey Ladds [Inuit], f 31d Kelsey to T. McCleish Jr, “bring the Companies Slaves Back.”

2 slaves back but they was dead.”²³ This positioning of the two “Slaves” as belonging to the Company strongly suggests that they were not free when they were sent on their journey. Other records are even clearer.

“For the use of ye factory:”²⁴ Accounts of slavery along Hudson Bay

While some references in archival records can be ambiguous, some are much less so. The HBC’s Fort Albany accounts show that, in the spring of 1694, the establishment had paid out a gun, a blanket, and other items in exchange for “an As’scomore slave boy for the use of ye factory.” It had only been the summer before, in 1693, that James Knight had led an attack on Albany, retaking the fort from the French, as European conflict between the French and English played out along the Bay.²⁵ In this history, Knight’s involvement with slavery in the region around Hudson Bay is much less known than his involvement with the story of Thanadelthur, even though Knight’s involvement in slavery is an important piece of fur trade history.

James Knight was born in the early 1640s. Trained in carpentry as a shipwright, he began working for the HBC in 1676. He spent five years along the Bay as a carpenter before returning to England where he reported to the London Committee on their operations in 1681. In 1682, Knight returned to North America as Deputy Governor and Chief Factor at the Company’s Albany Post. In 1685 he returned to London, where he faced accusations of private trading. Knight remained in England until 1692 when the HBC engaged him to lead an expedition to protect York Fort and retake the Bottom of the Bay from the French, a mission he undertook in 1693. Although the French captured York, Knight was able to hold Albany until 1697 when a treaty between France and England restored the HBC’s forts to them. Knight once again travelled to England in 1697, and back to the Bay in 1698. Returning to England in 1700, Knight was able to add enough HBC stock to that which he already held to be eligible to sit on its

²³ Kelsey, in *Three Hundred Prairie Years: Henry Kelsey's "Inland Country of Good Report,* 233-234.

²⁴ HBCA B.3/d/2 f 12d Albany Fort account book, 1693-94.

²⁵ HBCA B.3/d/2 f 12d Albany Fort account book, 1693-94; Ernest S. Dodge, “KNIGHT, JAMES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 8, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/knight_james_2E.html.

London Committee, which he did until 1713. Returning to the Bay, which was now under British control, Knight received York Factory back from the French. Throughout his career, Knight, who had begun with the Company as a barely literate carpenter, proved himself more than capable in the HBC's employ, increasing trade, and holding Albany at a time when it was the only remaining fort on the Bay under British control. Knight was lost on a voyage of discovery he had mounted for the HBC in 1719.²⁶

In 1703 John Fullartine, whom James Knight had chosen as his second in command while he was at Albany, and who had assumed command of the post when Knight left for England in 1700, wrote to the Hudson's Bay Company in London saying that he was sending "& Usquimay Girl a Slave, wh^[ich] was presented to Govr. Knight when he was here last."²⁷ Once the ship arrived in England, and after disposing of a number of other items of business over several meetings, the Governor and Committee in London came to the matter of the woman, recording in their minutes that "An Indian Girle being come with Capt Grimington from Hudsons Bay Ordered that Capt Knight may dispose of her if he think fitt according to his Instructions from Governor Fullerton."²⁸ If the Governor and Committee in London had failed to pick up on other references to the buying and selling of enslaved people by its employees in its own records, there can be no question that they understood this woman to be a chattel slave.

²⁶ Knight and Ray, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, ;Ernest S. Dodge, "KNIGHT, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 23, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/knight_james_2E.html; Patricia A. McCormack, "The Many Faces of Thanadelthur: Documents, Stories and Images," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003) 329–364, 331-332.

²⁷ HBCA A. 11/2, f 10, Governor and Committee inward correspondence from posts, Albany Fort 2 August 1703; Alice M. Johnson, "FULLARTINE, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 28, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fullartine_john_2E.html.

²⁸ HBCA A.1/25, f 20d, Fair Copies of Governor and Committee Minutes, 1702 - 1703, 5 [October] 1703.

By the time Knight returned to Hudson Bay in 1713, he was well-acquainted with the HBC's London operations and its Committee.²⁹ Back in Hudson Bay, Knight saw opening trade with the "Northern Indians" as key to increasing business in the region. Between Knight and this promising potential market stood the Cree who were not keen on seeing their enemies gaining the possible advantages trade with the HBC might offer. Knight needed someone who could provide diplomatic and linguistic support, as well as practical direction on the ground if he was going to establish regular trade with them. On the 22nd of November 1714, Knight marked the death of "an Indian Woman ...she being a Northern Slave that was taken ab^t 20 Months before all or most part of her friends being either taken or killed I had for Sev^{ll} times before she was [?] [conversed] to her ab^t the Country & people. She gave me Such Satisfaction in that I look upon it as a Very Great Loss as to her Death in information."³⁰

Much to Knight's relief, "The Slave Woman" Thanadelthur arrived at York Fort on the 24th of November 1714.³¹ While Thanadelthur may not have been not enslaved, others at the post were. In April and May of 1715 the York Factory Accounts under Knight show an expenditure of stockings, shoes, and a coat, given to "the Indian Slaveboy.... the Governor having agreed to purchase him for y^e Comp^y ." Another entry in the York Factory accounts, whether relating to this person or another is not clear, does make it plain that "the Slave Boy" in question was the property of the Company: "Given y^e Cap^t of this Rivers Wife to purchase of her the Slave Boy for the Company's Serv^{ce} & belonging to them."³² In the same period, the accounts recorded "Given the Leading Indian as ye master of the Northern Slave Woman to purchase her of him for y^e Company Service 1 Gun, 1 Stip^d blanket."³³ In July of 1715, Knight wrote in his journal

²⁹ Ernest S. Dodge, "KNIGHT, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 8, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/knight_james_2E.html.

³⁰ HBCA B.239/a/1, f 25, York Factory Journal, 1714 – 1715, 22 November 1714; McCormack, "The Many Faces of Thanadelthur, 332.

³¹ G. E. Thorman, "THANADELTHUR," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 8, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thanadelthur_2E.html.

³² HBCA B.239/d/7, f 9, York Factory Account Book, 1714 – 1715.

³³ 1715: HBCA B.239/d/7, f 14, York Factory Account Book, 1714 – 1715.

about “our slave boy Jack, who is very sick.”³⁴ On the 21st of April 1716, Knight wrote “I bought another slave boy this day. He is about 20 years old [and] has been 5 years amongst the Indians but gives the same account as all the rest hath done. Yett, notwithstanding this expedition has miscarry’d, I must try for it again,” suggesting that the word “boy” in at least some journal entries cannot always be understood to mean a child. While it is beyond the scope of this research, the use of the word “boy” in connection with slavery has had a long history of contributing to disempowerment and might have served a similar role here.³⁵ On 6 May 1716, Knight wrote “The Indians as the slave boy came from yesterday came to the factory to day and brought another boy and gave him to me. They allso brough me sevll Pieces of copper. I had a long discourse with them about their country. In so much that they told me,” suggesting, as with earlier references to the woman who had been sent to England, that in some cases slaves were presented as gifts as part of creating and maintaining alliances.³⁶

On the 22nd of April 1717, Knight wrote “I Gave the young ladd, the northern Indian as is with the capt [of the river], all the cloaths which I had newly made for the slave boy Jack as is dead, who I bought when I first came here and did design the boy Jack to have made his appearance in when I went to Churchill river amongst his country men.”³⁷ On the 29th of April 1716, Knight wrote “ There is no thought to go amongst them without a vessel to make a defence upon occasion where their boats is so large & so many of them and this confirms what the slave Woman told me as I bought, she being taken by them but made her escape. she told me there is a great many of them and has such boats as the Indians describes and that they kill very great fish and that the fatt was thicker than she could spann and that all their lands is made of copper.”³⁸ More ambiguously, on September 1st, 1716, Knight sent a “Slave Woman of that Country” to “go amongst the Cocauchee, or Crow Indians,” along with her husband and brother -in-law, a

³⁴ HBCA B.239/a/1 f 46d, York Factory Post Journal, 1714 – 1715, 2 July 1715.

³⁵ HBCA B.239/a/2, f 22, York Factory Post Journal, 1715 – 1716, 21 April 1716.

³⁶ HBCA B.239/a/2, f 26, York Factory Post Journal, 1715 – 1716, 6 May 1716.

³⁷ HBCA B.239/a/3, f 22d, York Factory Post Journal, 1716 – 1717, 22 April 1717.

³⁸ HBCA B.239/a/2, f 25, York Factory Post Journal, 1715 – 1716, 29 April 1716.

“leading Indian,” to broker a peace and return with “a great deal of the Yellow Metal [probably copper].”³⁹

Thanadlthur died on the 5th of February 1717.⁴⁰ On the 6th of May 1717, Knight purchased another woman for the equivalent of 60 made beaver, sending her in July of that year with Richard Norton to once again attempt to set up trading relations with the Chipewyan. In his journal he wrote

yesterday the Indian as came in bro^t a Northern Slave Woman w^{ch} I bought this Day having a Great Deal of Difficulty too get her & Paid dear for her for the cost of Above 60 Skins Value in Goods but have her I must & itt cost me what will for here is no One Else as can Speak one Word of that Country Language and this for the Boy as is with the Cap^t Understands but Little of the Indians Speech here besides he is so Jealous of him that he doth not care for him too Come near the Factory & part wth him I believe he would not for half the Goods in the Country & it is Impossible to have brought that trade without somebody Understood us & them too and Especially as our Circumstances was with us for Else we could not be able to Give them an Account of the Misfortunes as befell their Country People Since they first Came here w^{ch} now wee shall be able too give them an Account how things came too pass before it will be a Means of bringing a trade some Years Sooner than it could be done any other ways⁴¹

Whether Knight’s story of “the slave woman” was about the woman Thanádélthūr, the woman the Dene told Curtis about, or whether she was one of the many slaves the Hudson’s Bay Company may have taken in, been given, or may have purchased, her story in particular

³⁹ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 57; HBCA B.239/a/2, f 58, York Factory Post Journal, 1715 – 1716, 1 September 1716.

⁴⁰ G. E. Thorman, “THANADELTHUR,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 8, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thanadelthur_2E.html.

⁴¹ HBCA B.239/a/3, f 46d, York Factory Post Journal 1716 – 1717, 6 May 1717.

encapsulates the significant labour Indigenous slaves performed for the Company in extending their trade reach through networks of relationship. Her story is also an important reminder of the many social and political changes that contact with the Hudson's Bay Company brought in their wake.

Slavery along the Bay continued in the eighteenth century. The 1719-1720 York Factory account book includes expenses for "ye Esquemoes and Company's Slave Boys."⁴² And the enslaved woman sent to London from Albany in 1703 was not the only person to make that crossing. In 1738, Richard Staunton, in charge of Moose Factory, wrote to the Governor and Committee in London "Upon the request of Captain Middleton I have sent your slave home, the Escomay boy, he saying how serviceable he will be in informing them relating to the trade in the Straits relating to the whalebone." On 25 March 1741, the Minutes of the Governor and Committee in London noted: "Cap^t Christopher Middleton having had notice to attend the Sub Committee to morrow morning, to be at the making up of his acco^t with the Comp^y and to bring the Companys Servant the Esquemay Boy with him."⁴³ Hudson's Bay Company records continued to document enslaved or probably enslaved people well into the later part of the eighteenth century.

In 1753, Ferdinand Jacobs, stationed at Fort Churchill, wrote in the post's journal "this Day Gentlemen I Bought a Slave Indian man he is about 20 Years of Age and Seems to be of an agreeable Temper and according to y^e Jockes ways of Selling Horses he is sound wind & Limb." The post's account book for that year shows that Jacobs paid for this man with shot, coloured feathers, brandy, blanket, red cloth, blue corded cloth, file, net lines, flints, and a hat, "July y^e 21st Given for a Young Slave Indian man about 20 Years of age for y^e Comp^{ys} Service."⁴⁴ In 1758, "Churchill," perhaps the same man, was dismissed:

⁴² See for instance HBCA B.239/d/10, f 53d, York Factory Account Book, 1718-1720; HBCA B.239/d/11, f 7, York Factory Account Book, 1720 – 1721.

⁴³ HBCA A.11/43, f 11, Governor and Committee Inward Correspondence from Posts, 1732-1773; A.1/35, f 160-161, Fair Copies Governor and Committee Minutes, 1749 – 1742.

⁴⁴ HBCA B.42/a/40, f 62, Churchill Post Journal, 1752-1753, 21 July 1753; HBCA B.42/d/33, f 11, Fort Churchill Account Book, 1752 – 1753.

Last night M^r. Norton Desired your Hon^{rs} Slave Servant Churchill to go out the mens House to his bed in my House; for wh^{ch} he had the Impudence to Strike him, M^r. Norton then ordered Hen^{ry} Moor the Steward to bring him home to my House when I ordered him to his bed he being in Liquor which he was not willing to do. I therefore Endeavoured to put him to bed at which time he Struck at me for wh^{ch} I gave him his reward; and this Morning Dismissed him from Your Hon^{rs} Service, and Sent him away with ^{ye} Other Indians that Came Yesterday to Provide for himself.⁴⁵

While the above passage may seem a little ambiguous, combining terms more familiar in employment records, including “servant,” and “dismissed,” there is no record of either the “Slave Indian,” purchased in 1753 or “Churchill,” in 1757, being paid for his labour as other servants of the Company were.⁴⁶

Other labourers at HBC posts were also probably enslaved. An Inuit styled “Duke of Richmond” by the HBC appeared in the Fort Richmond account books in the 1750s, as well as “ye Boy Hector,” aka “Hector Northumberland,” and Dolly Northumberland, as Scott Stephen notes, all may well have been enslaved.⁴⁷ Francoise Trudel includes an Inuit named Trolio in this list, however, his relationship with the Company is ambiguous, and may have changed over time. John Long describes Trolio as having been “captured in his youth by the Mushkegowak.”⁴⁸ As Scott Stephens notes, “he appears to have been a labourer or general hand, but in the summer of 1779 was in charge of Moose’s upriver outpost Wapiscogamy House.”⁴⁹ In April of 1783,

⁴⁵ HBCA B.42/a/48, f 18, Fort Churchill Post Journal, 2 January 1757.

⁴⁶ HBCA B.42/d/36, Fort Churchill Account Book, 1755 – 1756.

⁴⁷ Stephen, *Masters and Servants*, 122.

⁴⁸ Long et. al., “Sharing the Land at Moose Factory,” 243; Francois Trudel, “Trolio et Jack: deux Inuit au service de la Compagnie de la Baie d’Hudson au XVIII^e siècle,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 7:1 (1987), 79-93.

⁴⁹ Stephen, *Masters and Servants*, 119.

Edward Jarvis, Chief at Albany wrote in the fort's journal that he had paid thirty made beaver for "an Esquimaux boy."⁵⁰

Moving Inland: "A useful Servant to y^e Company,"⁵¹ the life of John Easter

While existing records highlight the important part enslaved people played in creating alliances, in language and diplomacy, and in the extension of trade networks for the Hudson's Bay Company, many of these slaves probably provided unfree and unpaid general labour for the Company. This was certainly the case for an Inuit boy who would come to spend his work life in the fur trade. The early 1780s were difficult ones in the Hudson Bay lowlands. Racked with a devastating smallpox epidemic and periodic famine, the Hudson's Bay Company's Albany Fort Chief Edward Jarvis⁵² noted that things were so bad that people felt that "God was angry with their country."⁵³ It was in the midst of this distress that Jarvis wrote on the 19th of April 1783 that he had

Traded an Esquimaux boy, who I found the Indians were for murdering if I had not done so, paid 30 Beaver for him, and hope as he is only about 7 y^{rs} old a promising tractable Child he will make a useful Servant to y^e Company, being traded on Easter Eve named him Easter.⁵⁴

"John (sometimes Jack) Easter," as this child came to be known, seems to have remained with the Hudson's Bay Company along the Bay until the summer of 1793, when he was part of a boat

⁵⁰ HBCA B.3/a/81, f 24, Albany Post Journal, 1782 – 1783, 19 April 1783.

⁵¹ HBCA B.3/a/81, f 24, Albany Post Journal, 1782 – 1783, 19 April 1783.

⁵² See Jarvis' biography here: F. Pannekoek, "JARVIS, EDWARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 2, 2020. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jarvis_edward_4E.html.

⁵³ Victor P. Lytwyn, "God Was Angry with Their Country": The Smallpox Epidemic of 1782–83 among the Hudson Bay Lowland Cree. *Papers of the 30th Algonquian Conference*, David H. Pentland, ed. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 142–164; 160.

⁵⁴ HBCA B.3/a/81, f 24, Albany Post Journal, 1782 – 1783, 19 April 1783.

brigade that travelled to Brandon House under fur trader Donald Mackay.⁵⁵ Easter would remain at Brandon House, mostly employed in provisioning the post, while adding coopering and carpentry to his skills, for several decades.⁵⁶

The late 1790s were fraught years at Brandon House. Competition from other fur traders, including the NWC, in the area not only meant that the post had to compete for Indigenous customers but to keep their workers. As with the story of Joseph Lewis, the Company's indentured servant labourers were being enticed to leave the HBC and work for rival traders and companies. In November 1796, not even a year before Colen would assert that slavery in "this free Country" was unthinkable, that "humanity forbids it," the fur trader in charge at Brandon House, the same James Sutherland who had found himself in the middle of Lewis' defection from Beaubien, was dealing with the defection of two of his own men, Jacob Henderson and Thomas Richards.⁵⁷ With Sutherland's labour force significantly diminished, John Easter saw his chance for freedom and took it. Advocating for a better position for himself, he argued that "he has no wages, can get nothing of his wants and necessaries, is proffered great wages from the Canadians," and therefore should be paid for his labour. This, Sutherland wrote, was "mutineering," as Easter was "a Esquimaux and the Company Slave." In his journal Sutherland continued to lament the challenges he faced in getting Easter and another man, Richards, to return to duty for him:

1796 Saturday November 19th I have flattered him and given as much as is in my power with propriety to supply his wants and given him a quart of Brandy yet

⁵⁵ HBCA B.22/a/1, f 1, Brandon House Post Journal, 1793-1794; See Mackay's biography at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mackay_d1.shtml; and Sutherland's HBCA Biographical Sheet at: https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/s/sutherland_james1770-1797.pdf

⁵⁶ See Appendix B for more information about this. See also HBCA A.32/27 f 3, Servants' Contracts – E, 1818-ca.1926; HBCA B.239/u/1 #629, Northern Department Servants Register.

⁵⁷ See Sutherland's biography here: Shirlee Anne Smith, "SUTHERLAND, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sutherland_james_4E.html. See also Manitoba Historical Society Biography at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/sutherland_j4.shtml.

it avails nothing, to go to [rigger?] with him I am loath his Ignorance gets the best of his reason

I have been obliged therefore to lock the gates which has been only barr'd for some time, that he may not desert me in the night

1796 November 20th.... the people had much trouble in keeping Easter from eloping on the night. This day I went to the Canadian House backt with 4 men and before he was [aware] seized Richards and forced him down to the House and lockt the gates on him, had I not taken him suddenly the canadians was determined to assist him, in this adventure I run a risqué as he graspt his Cutlass and had he but warning, was determined to run me through before he was taken.⁵⁸

Finally, through a combination of force and cajoling, Sutherland managed to get Richards to return to work, “which has also put Easter of the thought of deserting” Sutherland wrote.⁵⁹

Far from “ignorant,” as Sutherland had described him, other traders wrote well of Easter, and the respect he had earned, combined with his sense of timing, seems to have worked because he was already working under contract as a paid labourer before 1800. In 1804, Brandon Post Master John McKay wrote favourably about Easter in his journal. Easter had fallen so ill he could not get out bed, “it is a pity, he is a good lad a good Steersman and very serviceable in many other respects,” stated McKay.⁶⁰ By the early 1800s Easter had a family.⁶¹ In 1808, he worked and

⁵⁸ HBCA B.22/a/4, f 19-19d, Brandon House Post Journal, 1796-1797, 19 and 20 November, 1796.

⁵⁹ HBCA B.22/a/4, f 19-19d, Brandon House Post Journal, 1796-1797, 19 and 20 November, 1796.

⁶⁰ HBCA B.22/a/11, f 12-12d, Brandon House Post Journal, 1803-1804.

⁶¹ HBCA B.22/a/9, f 28, Brandon House Post Journal, 1801-1802. Letter From Mr. Jn McKay, Brandon house ... To Mr Miller Red River, Jan. 20th 1802, “Jack Easter & his family will come here by water in the Spring”

travelled with Peter Fidler,⁶² who noted that "... Jack Easter one of the Albany men kills several Ducks, & some Geese every day walking along shore – he also killed several Turtles about 10 lb weight. This river a plentiful place for these animals."⁶³

Around 1815, as tensions between the HBC and NWC were coming to a head, Easter left contracted employment with the HBC to become a "freeman," that is, someone who was not restricted to working for a particular company.⁶⁴ Labouring on his own behalf now, he returned to work periodically with the HBC at least into the 1830s.⁶⁵ Around 1822, Easter relocated to the Red River Settlement because of poor health, and he and his wife were listed in censuses for the settlement after that.⁶⁶ The marriage register for St. John's Church in the Red River Settlement shows that John Easter formally married Nancy [aka Ann], an Indigenous woman from the settlement, on June 14th, 1831. Nancy was baptized at St. John's Cathedral September 10th, 1841 and was buried at St. Andrew's Church July 20th, 1846. John Easter's burial appears as an entry in the St. John's Cathedral Burial Register for August 29th, 1853.⁶⁷

During the time that John Easter worked for the HBC, both as an enslaved person and then under contract, chattel slavery operated not only along the Bay, but also in the interior of the continent, including in the region around Brandon House where Easter was posted. In addition to the several entries from North Wester John McDonell's "Journal, Assiniboines and Rivière

⁶² Robert S. Allen, "FIDLER, PETER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 2, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fidler_peter_6E.html. See also Manitoba Historical Society, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/fidler_p.shtml

⁶³ HBCA E.3/3, f 51, f 55, Peter Fidler, "Journal of a Journey from Swan to the Red River and down it in [a inserted] Canoe from the Elbow to its entrance into Lake Winnipeg _ & along the South & Eastern Shores to its Discharge into the Elongation of the Saskatchewan River or Nelson's River. By Peter Fidler," 1790-1809.

⁶⁴ HBCA B.27/b/1, f 2-3, Carleton House (Saskatchewan) Correspondence Books, Letter from James Sutherland, Swan River to James Bird. October 3, 1816.

⁶⁵ See Appendix B.

⁶⁶ See Appendix B; and HBCA A.32/27, f 2.

⁶⁷ Gloria Romaniuk, archivist, Anglican Church, personal communication.

Qu'Appelle, 1793-1795,” and Archibald Norman McLeod’s Fort Alexandria journal already noted, in November of 1796 McDonell, who had probably recently become a partner with the NWC, sent a party, including a servant, Desmarais, to John Evans, a trader on the Missouri River. Evans had been living with the Mandan since 1790. Writing to Evans on the 23rd of November 1796 from “River la Souris,” McDonell asked for Evan’s help in two matters relating to slaves. “Garreau [probably Joseph Garreau] owes here the price of a horse,” he told Evans, “besides the Horse he decoyed from M^r S. [?] Mackay & a slave girl he owes to my servant man – I hope if in your power you will help Desmarais to receive what he can out of his hands.” In the same letter, McDonell also wrote that he was sending by way of Mr. Desmarais, in an effort to recover the debt of René Jusseaume, “Jusseaume's will and power to have his Peltries & little slave girl &c delivered to the bearer.”⁶⁸ McDonell had evidently accepted Jusseaume’s “little slave girl” as security against trade items which he had advanced to the trader, and now was calling in this security.

At about the same time, James Sutherland wrote to Evans that he was sending two of his men to accompany some Canadian traders including a “Mr. De Murier,” certainly the same Desmarais, with the express intention of purchasing a “Slave girl.” “The Canadians, having lost their Horses the first or 2d night from the Missourie obliged them to leave their property behind, which they now return for,” Sutherland wrote in a letter dated 21 January 1797. “Two of my men out of curiosity accompanys them to see the Mandan Villages and to try if they can purchase a Slave

⁶⁸ John McDonell to John Evans, River La Souris, 23 November 1796, quoted in A.P. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark; documents illustrating the history of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 478- 480; A. P. Nasatir, "Anglo-Spanish Rivalry on the Upper Missouri." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 16, no. 4 (1930): 507-28, 516. Accessed December 22, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1896542>; Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in western Canada*, 62. Jusseaume had become a resident trader in the Mandan Villages around 1790, working at times for both the HBC and NWC. Much of his trade involved selling goods he had obtained from the Assiniboine River posts. Evans and Jusseaume were in opposition in the trade. Jusseaume served as an interpreter for David Thompson and for Lewis and Clark. Jean-Baptiste Truteau, Raymond J. DeMallie, Douglas R. Parks, Robert Vézina, Mildred Mott Wedel, and Jean-Baptiste Trudeau. *A Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Journal and Description of Jean-Baptiste Truteau, 1794-1796* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 600. Daniel Royot. *Divided Loyalties in a Doomed Empire: The French in the West: from New France to the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2007), 184.

girl,” he added.⁶⁹ Sutherland noted in his journal entry for 20 January 1797, “[James] Yorston and Slettar preparing to go to the Mandals, it being a voluntary proposal of their own, I have no Objections and shall let them have some Powder and Ball to Trade there, but have nothing else to send.” The next day he wrote “James Yorston and James Sletter set off for the Mandales.” In terms of purchasing a slave, the trip appears to have proven unsuccessful. On the 25th of February 1797, Sutherland noted that “About 3 P.M Slettar and Yorston arrived from the Mandals with 4 Sleds well loaded with Furs. M^r Evans was as cival to them as his wretched sitewation would admit, but would not permit them to Trade with the natives, he Traded all the goods they had and gave them furs for it, but would have bought it much cheaper had they dealt with the natives.”⁷⁰ Slavery in the fur trade in the area continued even as the century was drawing to a close. In 1798, Post Master John McKay, who had joined the HBC in 1790, working in the Albany District, at St. Anne’s and at Lac la Pluie, before moving to Brandon wrote in his journal for 3 February 1798 that “at 10 PM 10 Canadians arrived from the Mandles with two Natives of that place and two slave women. I thought there was but 8 Canadians went to the Mandles, I now find I was mistaken.” On April 26 of the same year, McKay wrote that “yesterday I heard the Canadians that went to the Mandles with several of the Natives from that place were expected in today, in consequence of which, last night after dark I sent James Slater, Tom Favill, Jn^o Lyons and Louis Jolly Cour, off to meet them. there is a Menor [possibly Menard?], an old residentir [a “residenter” was a trader who lived with an Indigenous community] amongst them who promised me his Furr, provided I would send to meet him.” McKay continued, “this morning the Men returned and acquainted me that Menor had given all his Furr to the Canadians. notwithstanding Menors Duplicity, he paid me a visit this day with some of the Mandles. he offered to sell me 3 fine Horses and a Slave Girl, to be paid next Fall. I

⁶⁹ James Sutherland to John Evans (trader at Fort Mackay), Brandon House, 21 January 1797, in A.P. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark; documents illustrating the history of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 499-500.

⁷⁰ HBCA B.22/a/4, f 28d, f 31, Brandon House Post Journal, 1796 -1797, 20 January 1797, 25 February 1797.

told him to sell his Horses and Slaves where he sold his Furs, that Birds of a Feather should all go together.”⁷¹

Brandon House’s interest in trading in slaves did not end with the close of the eighteenth century. On 21 December 1801, Thomas Bunn, then in charge of Brandon House,⁷² wrote in his post journal that “At 3 PM W Yorston, Ja Slater Jun., W Louttit & Ja Moar arrived from the Mandans with about 300 B. in Wolves. they inform me that the Ind. cannot hunt on account of their wars. while our men were there they brought 150 horses & 8 Slaves from the Snake Ind. they destroy'd 18 Tents of them in a battle close to the Mandan Village.”⁷³ In 1806, on his return to the Mandan Villages, Alexander Henry the elder described a group of "A party of 30 Rocky Mountain Indians of the Crow nation," who “had arrived with their families at the Big Bellies’ villages, with a great number of horses, and some skins, furs, and slaves,” which they wanted “to barter for guns, ammunition, tobacco, axes, etc., as those people have no other means of procuring European articles. Some of them, indeed, go toward the Spanish settlements with the Flatheads; but what they get in that way is too trifling to answer their purposes,” Henry noted.⁷⁴ On the plains, as elsewhere, the fur trade in slaves was neither benign, nor was it neutral.

⁷¹ HBCA B.22/a/5, f 27, f 34d, Brandon House Post Journal, 1797-1798, 3 February 1798, 26 April 1798; HBCA Biographical Sheets, “McKay, John,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/mc/mckay_john1790-1810.pdf. Accessed 24 December 2020.

⁷² See Thomas Bunn’s biography here: Manitoba Historical Society: http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/bunn_t1.shtml.

⁷³ HBCA B.22/a/9, f 12d – 13, Brandon House Post Journal, 1801-1802. The journal entry for 9 October identified the party as they left Brandon House as “old J^a. Slater, young J^a. Slater, Wm Louttit, J^a. Moar & Wm Yorston.”

The people identified as “Snake Indians” in the area around the Mandan Villages were probably the group the Lewis and Clark expedition identified as the “Sosonees or *Snake* Indians.” Quoted in William R. Swagerty, *The Indianization of Lewis and Clark*. (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Co, 2012), 367.

⁷⁴ Henry, Thompson, Coues, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, 378; see also Alexander Henry, the elder, and Charles Napier Bell, “Continuation of Henry's journal: Covering adventures and experiences in the fur trade on the Red River, 1799-1801. *Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society Transactions*, read 9 May 1889, 18.

It is likely that the slaves mentioned in these records were predominantly or even entirely girls and women, with perhaps a few younger boys. Citing Hubert Smith, Raymond Wood notes Francois de la Vérendrye's 1742 observations that a large group of people he identified as "Snakes" had "completely defeated seventeen villages' (of unspecified ethnicity), killing everyone except young women who were taken as slaves." These women, Francois de la Vérendrye said, were sold on the "seacoast" for horses.⁷⁵ In *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interiour of North America*, Daniel Harmon, speaking broadly about Indigenous captivity, observed that, generally, "thy (sic) make terrible havoc among the men; but they labour to take as many of their women and children alive, as they possibly can, in order to carry them home as slaves. They never torture these captives; but keep them to perform the menial service about their tents, or dispose of them to others."⁷⁶

What became of the particular slaves that the Brandon, Souris, and Qu'Appelle traders brought back is not recorded, but a letter written on the 13th of December 1822 by an anxious Catholic priest at Pembina, in what is today North Dakota, hints at a possibility for at least some. "We have here some Canadians married to slaves who were captured by other Indian tribes and married during their captivity," wrote Sévère Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis in Quebec. "Since this time they have been the wives of company employees, some for as long as twenty and thirty years. Must they be separated and abandon their children if they wish to receive baptism; and if it happens that they are already separated, and have contracted marriage within the Church, how then should they be dealt with?" he asked.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Wood, W. Raymond. "The Earliest Map of the Mandan Heartland: Notes on the Jarvis and Mackay 1791 Map." *Plains Anthropologist* 55, no. 216 (2010): 255-76, 258, 266. Accessed December 22, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23057064>.

⁷⁶ Harmon, Daniel Williams, and Daniel Haskel. *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interiour of North America, between the 47th and 58th Degrees of North Latitude, Extending from Montreal Nearly to the Pacific Ocean* (Andover: Printed by Flagg and Gould, 1820) 355.

⁷⁷ Sévère Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis, 13 December 1822 in Grace Lee Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions: 1815-1827* (Saint Paul: Published for the Clarence Walworth Alvord Memorial Commission by the Minnesota Historical Society, 1942), 389.

“At least at such a cheap rate:” Freedom, unfreedom, ambiguities and instabilities in women’s lives in the early nineteenth century fur trade

Other archival records offer brief glimpses into the lived experiences of enslaved women during the fur trade. Imperfect as these stories are, transmitted through the narratives and narrative lenses of fur traders and missionaries, the slivers of life stories these records present problematize easy understandings of freedom vs unfreedom, while reminding the reader of the real, human costs and experiences that are at the core of unfreedom in the fur trade. In the fur trade, as in other parts of empire, freedom and unfreedom seldom existed as absolute binaries. In this context, it is particularly difficult to fully tease out the degree of agency individuals had in the context of chattel slavery, how much they might have been able to exert their own wills or benefit themselves by their own labour, and conversely, the limitations to freedom individuals who were not chattel slaves may have experienced, given the sources that have survived into today. And if unfreedom could be ambiguous, it could also be unstable. The following three stories of women’s experiences highlight these points. All three of these women experienced periods where their freedom was bartered, and all three went through periods where the degree to which they were free changed. At the same time, escape from chattel slavery did not necessarily mean complete freedom. Importantly, besides the similarities in each of these stories, these women’s experiences make it clear that each woman’s experiences were uniquely her own.

The first of these three stories highlights how easily a woman’s future could turn on decisions made by others. In her book, *Strangers in Blood Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, Jennifer S.H. Brown recounts an incident where a woman found herself a bargaining chip between a voyageur named La Malice, and the fur trader and explorer Simon Fraser. In this story, in 1806, Fraser bargained with an engage tellingly known as “La Malice” over whether the voyageur would remain with Fraser’s party. Set as leverage in these negotiations was the future of an unnamed woman La Malice had earlier “debauched,” a term that could mean either taken or tempted away, from a fellow labourer named Blais. La Malice the prevailed on “Mr. McDougall to sell her... and she accompanied him here but neither [Mr. McDougall] nor any other had any such power from me,” wrote Fraser, asserting his authority over such arrangements. “I intend that La Malice will not keep her at least at such a cheap rate,” he continued. La Malice countered by refusing “to accompany us across the Mountains, alledging

that by his agreement that he is not obliged to go there or even to winter in any part of the Peace River.” Not having La Malice’s engagement agreement to hand, Fraser acquiesced for the moment.⁷⁸

A few days later, Fraser again spoke with La Malice, telling him that he particularly needed him on the journey, and asking him what his plans were, at the same time advising La Malice that “if he expected the woman he had would accompany him, whether he went up or down [to Montreal], that would be mistaken.” La Malice returned that, while he was under no obligation to travel to the Peace River or beyond, “if allowed to keep the woman that he was willing to follow wherever I would lead.” Fraser replied that he “would not embark the best man in Athabaska on such conditions,” but, “however I might accede it as a favor.” La Malice agreed to the deal, and Fraser allowed him to take the woman “but not as his property” and “provided she was willing to remain with him.”⁷⁹ While pushing back against the idea that La Malice would be allowed to keep this woman as his property, Fraser did not categorically exclude the possibility of women being treated that way. And, if Fraser did not exactly buy or sell the woman at the centre of these negotiations, he certainly leveraged the value La Malice placed on her. At the same time, the woman in question had no apparent input and no control over the outcome of these negotiations.

Like the story of La Malice, Fraser, and the unnamed woman at the heart of the previous story, two more stories, each recounted briefly in missionary journals from the late 1820s and early 1830s at Red River offer small glimpses of the lives of two more of the women who found themselves caught up in the ambiguities and instabilities of the unfreedom that surrounded the trafficking of women during the fur trade. The first story comes from the Reverend David Thomas Jones, who served the Anglican (Church of England) Church Missionary Society through its mission at Red River from 1823 to 1838.⁸⁰ On October 2nd, 1827 Jones recorded in

⁷⁸ Quoted in Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 113.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 113-114.

⁸⁰ S. M. Johnson and T. F. Bredin, “JONES, DAVID THOMAS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 6, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jones_david_thomas_7E.html.

the Anglican mission's baptismal register that he had baptized "Baptiste, son of An Iroquois Indian by A Slave Indian woman," at the Church Mission School."⁸¹

In November of the same year, Jones wrote in his journal that "After worship was concluded an Indian Woman of the Slave tribe came to ask the admission of her little boy to the Mission School. The woman's history is singular," Jones noted. "She was taken when in war when a little Girl by a party of Sasketchiwin Indians, and would have been sacrificed to the daemon of revenge had not a Gentleman then conducting the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company in that quarter paid the price of her ransom. She was subsequently committed to an Iroquois Indian in the Company's Service, who afterwards fell in a skirmish with the Natives during a trading excursion," he continued. "This woman with her Son came to the Settlement some time ago. She said she was very anxious for her Son to learn about salvation through Christ that he might afterward instruct her."⁸² With no information about the child's father's or mother's names, the child and his mother disappear from view after this entry.

It is possible to tease out more from the story of the woman who was at the centre of the next narrative, which was recorded by another missionary at Red River, the Reverend William Cockran, this time in 1833. "Went to baptize two individuals, one an Adult, the other an Infant," Cockran began. "The Adult had been very unfortunate in her youth, being taken from her tribe by a war party and afterwards sold by them; she endured a series of misfortunes and at last became the property of a man who prostituted her person for hire," he continued. "During this period she brought forth a spurious offspring. When the Gospel was preached among them, it soon discovered to them their errors, and pointed out the necessity of a reformation: some cordially embraced the truth and sought to make compensation to them whom they had injured: this led every father to claim his own & take them under his immediate care, for the sake of

⁸¹ "Extracts from registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials in Rupert's Land," HBCA E.4,1a, f 66d, Baptism # 685.

⁸² In entry for November 27, 1827, Adam Matthews "Empire Online," Church Missionary Society, Original Papers, Letters and Papers, Rev. David T. Jones, 1823 – 1839. It is possible that Jones was referring to James Curtis Bird (see the story following for more on Bird) as the HBC officer here, but the details given by Jones in this entry are not sufficiently specific to confirm this.

restraining them for evil and training them up according to Christian principles,” explained the missionary.⁸³

But, wrote Cockran, “the division of this woman’s family did not meet her approbation. One of her children was claimed by an individual whose claim she disputed, though she did not deny the connexion, yet her strong native prejudices made her give her decision in favor of another. The settling of this affair was therefore left to arbitrators who gave their opinions in favour of him whose claim the mother had disallowed,” he explained. “This old business had always given the mother great uneasiness, and as she was now to be received into the Christian Church by baptism she wished me to understand fully her motives for resisting the opinions formerly given against her,” Cockran noted, continuing that

I told her that I came not to preach to her as a righteous woman, or any of them as righteous people, but as sinners whom God was desirous of reconciling to himself through his Son: for this reason we offered them a Saviour mighty to save and promised them deliverance from all their sins through his name; and all that was necessary to make her a worthy member of the Church of Christ was repentance whereby she was sorry for her past sins, hated them, and turned from them unto God, faith in the power and willingness of Christ to pardon her past sins and to enable her to lead a better life for the future and a constant endeavour to discharge every duty to God, her family, her neighbours, and her own soul according to the word of God.⁸⁴

⁸³ 30 September 1833, Adam Matthews “Empire Online,” Church Missionary Society Mission Book, North-West Canada, 1822 – 1834, Reverend W. Cockran’s Journal, 1833 -1834, F 11-12. On the 4th of December 1826, James Hargrave wrote to John George McTavish complaining that “peace reigns throughout the Colony. Those who arrogate themselves the exclusive title of the Godly hold their love meetings, their evenings of exercise, and their seasons for social devotion without let or hindrance, - where they are edified by the detestable holdings forth of a Garrioch, a Corrigal, or a [Hawcro]. LAC, James Hargrave and Family Fonds, reel c-80, at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c80/586?r=0&s=4, accessed 7 April 2021.

⁸⁴ 30 September 1833, Adam Matthews “Empire Online,” Church Missionary Society Mission Book, North-West Canada, 1822 – 1834, Reverend W. Cockran’s Journal, 1834, F 11-12.

On that same day, in the mission's baptismal register, Cockran recorded that he had baptized "Margaret Howrie, An Adult Woman," and "Philip son of John & Margaret Howrie, settler," at the Red River Settlement.⁸⁵

John Hourie was probably born about 1775 in the Orkney Islands.⁸⁶ Before settling at Red River in the early 1820s, Hourie had worked for many years in what is today the Canadian Prairie West, mostly in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta, much of it in the HBC's Saskatchewan District. In 1810, Hourie was a member of the famous Howse Expedition, an undertaking that also included Joseph Lewis, who has been discussed earlier.⁸⁷ By 1820, John Hourie was

Although outside the scope of this present research, this passage also points to the changes in traditional gendered roles and responsibilities that were taking place at Red River at this time.

⁸⁵ Archives of Manitoba, Extracts from registers of baptisms, marriages and burials in Rupert's Land sent to the Governor and Committee, HBCA E.4/1a, f. 105, #s 588 and 589.

⁸⁶ HBCA B.60/d/1, f5, Saskatchewan, Swan River and Hill River House men's debts, 1809, <http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M467/B60-D-1.pdf>; B.60/d/2a, f24, Edmonton Account Book, 1810-1811. Dates for his birth indicated by his age in census and sacramental records range between approximately 1770 and 1779, but tend to cluster around 1774 to 1775, see, for instance: LAC, Index to Kipling Collection, item 4447, "Hourie, John, burial 1857-08-18, age 87 years, St. Andrew's Church, at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/vital-statistics-births-marriages-deaths/births-marriages-deaths-recorded/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=4447&>; AM, E.5/1 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown, 1827, Hourie, John; E.5/2 (H2-136-1-2), 1828; E.5/3 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, 1829; E.5/4 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown, 1830; E.5/5 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown, 1831; E.5/6 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown, 1832; E.5/7 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown, 1833; E.5/8 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1835; E.5/9 (H2-033-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement; E.5/9 (H2-033-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1838; E.5/10 (H2-033-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1840; E.5/11 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1843; P7537/4, Red River Census 1846-1847; and P7537/5, Red River Census 1849.

⁸⁷ H. Christoph Wolfart, "HOWSE, JOSEPH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 7, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/howse_joseph_8E.html; HBCA, B.60/d/2b, f 6, Columbia or Flat Head River accounts, 1810-1811; HBCA B.60/d/2a, f24, Edmonton Account Book, 1810-1811. John Hourie's name (also "Howrie") also appears in post journals for the Saskatchewan District in the 18-teens, for instance, HBCA, B.60/a/11, Edmonton Post Journal, 1812-1813; B.27/a/4,

stationed at Red River, and by 1822, his name no longer appeared in the post's servants' debt books, suggesting that he may have made the transition from labourer to settler around that time.⁸⁸

On the 5th of June 1823, as the CMS missionary the Reverend John West was preparing to leave to travel to York Factory, he baptized no less than fifteen individuals, and married three couples, all on the same day. Of this entire group, only two people, a couple who married that day, John Matheson and Anne Polson, did not have clear connections to the fur trade in the HBC's Saskatchewan District. The rest, Andrew, Margaret, and Janette Dunnett, all children of William Dunnett and "an Indian," Catherine, John, Isabella, and two women named Margaret Park, apparently mother and daughter, William Bird, son of James Curtis Bird and his wife Venus Hay, Peter Corrigan's wife Christy, and his son James Corrigan, and John, Robert, and Thomas Hourie, along with John Whiteway, son of James Whiteway and Mary Park, who were baptized, and Christy and Peter Corrigan and Margaret and John Parke were formally married, all had ties to the HBC and its Saskatchewan District.⁸⁹

In addition to their connections with the Saskatchewan District in the 1810s, this group all appear to have arrived at Red River around the same time. William Bird's father James Curtis Bird was the Acting Governor of Rupert's Land from 1817 to 1818, then Chief of the District of Cumberland Saskatchewan until 1820 when he became Chief Factor of the Forks, Red River in 1820-1821. He was Chief in charge of the Lower Red River District in 1821-1822, going on furlough the next year before returning in 1823 to 1824 as Chief Factor in charge of Upper Red River District, and finally retiring in Red River in June of 1824. James Curtis Bird had had a number of Indigenous wives before coming to Red River. On the 30th of March 1821, he

Carlton House (Saskatchewan District) post journal, 1814-1815; Carlton House (Saskatchewan District) post journal, 1815-1816; HBCA B. 60/f/1, f 3, Edmonton [Saskatchewan Department] List of Servants, 1815 -1816.

⁸⁸ HBCA B.235/d/, f7, Upper Fort Garry servants' debt book, 1820-1821; B.235/d/10 Upper Fort Garry and Red River District servants' debt book, 1822-1823.

⁸⁹ E.4/1a, Extracts from registers of baptisms, marriages and burials in Rupert's Land sent to the Governor and Committee, folio 43-43d, E.4/1b folio 207d-208.

formally married Elizabeth, with whom he remained until her death in 1834. Shortly after Elizabeth's death, Bird married a White woman, Mrs. Mary Lowman, the governess of the Female Seminary at Red River.⁹⁰ John Park and James Whiteway had both been on the Howse Expedition with John Hourie. In his account with the HBC, Park was listed under Colonists, Freemen, etc. beginning in 1822, while Whiteway was last listed in the Saskatchewan District in 1823. William Dunnett was listed as a Colonist and Freeman at Red River beginning in 1822-1823. Peter Corrigan worked in the Edmonton/Saskatchewan District from at least 1802. From 1819 to 1823, he was identified in the HBC records as a "Scotch Settler," at the Red River Settlement, finally retiring there in June 1824.⁹¹

In his scrip application, one of the children of Margaret and John Hourie, Peter, stated that his mother was a "Snake Indian." In his later years, Peter Hourie shared his life story with a visitor. That story subsequently made it into a number of papers, the story continuing to appear into the 1920s. In Peter's reminiscences, for example, in a version that appeared in the *Gleichen Call* in December, 1920, he told the interviewer that his "mother was a Snake Indian." Was she a "full-blooded Indian," the interviewer asked? "He said she was, but she had been brought up by Chief Factor [James Curtis] Bird, and had white ways. Of this union there were seven sons, and no daughter. Mrs. Hourie had been previously married to a settler named Corrigan, and by him she had one son, James, who was eventually drowned in the Red River, near the old Hourie

⁹⁰ HBCA Biographical Sheets, Bird, James Sr.; John E. Foster, "BIRD, JAMES (d. 1856)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003—, accessed April 7, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bird_james_1856_8E.html; HBCA B.60/d/2a, f 14-15, 19, 24, Edmonton Account Book, 1810-1811; HBCA B.60/d/2a, f 14-15, 19, 24, Edmonton Account Book, 1810-1811; HBCA, B.60/d/2b, f 6, Columbia or Flat Head River accounts, 1810-1811.

⁹¹ HBCA Biographical Sheets, Bird, James Sr.; Corrigan, Peter; Dunnet, William; Park, John; Whiteway, James; HBCA B.60/d/1, f 2d, 3, 5, 7, 10, Saskatchewan, Swan River and Hill River House men's debts, 1809; HBCA B.60/d/1, f 2d, 3, 5, 7, 10, Saskatchewan, Swan River and Hill River House men's debts, 1809; HBCA B.60/d/2a, f 14-15, 19, 24, Edmonton Account Book, 1810-1811; HBCA, B.60/d/2b, f 6, Columbia or Flat Head River accounts, 1810-1811; HBCA B.60/d/2a, f 14d, 24, Edmonton Account Book, 1810-1811; HBCA B.60/f/1, f 2, 3, 5, 6, Edmonton list of servants, 1815-1816.

homestead,” the article reported.⁹² It is hard to know how to read Peter Hourie’s story of his mother having been adopted by the Birds, however the name of his half brother is interesting.

The name “Corrigan” is unusual in records relating to Red River in this period, in fact, no records for anyone with that last name in the period have been located to date. On the other hand, Corrigan is a relatively familiar name in the settlement, many with that name at Red River having connections to Peter Corrigan. As has already been seen, James Corrigan, son of Peter, was one of those baptized on the 5th of June 1823, along with a number of Hourie children. And although James is identified as the son of Peter and Christy Corrigan in the record of his baptism, in his scrip application, James identified his mother as “Margaret an Indian.”⁹³

Married in church on the 10th of May 1825, although their children’s ages clearly show that their relationship preceded this by at least 15 years, as Peter Hourie stated, John and Margaret would raise seven boys, although one, Thomas, identified his mother as “Ann Cunningham” in several documents, suggesting that he may have been a stepson to Margaret.⁹⁴ Over the years the Hourie

⁹² Peter Hourie passed away on the 17th of September, 1910, “Peter Howrie, Famous Half-breed, Dead,” *The Leader-Post*, 10 September 1910, 6. RG15-D-II-3, Volume number: 182, Microfilm reel number: T-12025, T-12025, File number: HB 1648, N.W.H.B. Head Parents: John Hourie and Margaret. Born 1825 [Peter Hourie’s scrip application], at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/CollectionSearch/Pages/record.aspx?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=1496965&new=-8585837843306460111>, accessed 7 April 2021; “Mr. Peter Hourie,” *Gleichen Call*, December 22, 1920, 2. In a local history book published in 1998, descendants of another son, Philip, also stated that she had been a “Snake Indian.” High Bluff History Book Committee, *Harvest of History: High Bluff and Area*, 1998, 23, 244. As Binnema has shown, relating the name “Snake Indian” to any modern groups is difficult, if not impossible, however it is very likely that the people referred to here as “Snake Indians” were from the West. Ted Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019 [2004]), see especially ca 80-85.

⁹³ LAC, Scrip affidavit for Corrigan, James; born: 1810; father: Peter Corrigan (Scot); mother: Margaret (Indian); claim no.: 39; date of issue: May 1, 1876, at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/CollectionSearch/Pages/record.aspx?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=1500162&new=-8585837836829235648>. This James Corrigan died as a result of self-harm in 1887, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 February 1887, 4; Government of Manitoba Vital Statistics database, “James Corrigan,” birth date, about 1809, death date, 10 February 1887, St. Andrew’s Manitoba.

⁹⁴ LAC, “HALFBREED CLAIM OF THOMAS HOURIE,” RG15-D-II-1, Volume number: 650, Microfilm reel number: T-13898, T-13898, File number: 268442, at

family built up their farm, in 1827 the family had a house, a stable, a horse, a mare, six cows, an ox, a cart, a plough, and two canoes, with five acres under cultivation. In 1833, John Jr. married Janet Dunnet, one of the people he had been baptized with in 1823. By the time of the 1835 census, John Jr. had moved to his own farm, and by 1840, Robert was farming his own land as well. By 1846 John Sr. boasted a house, 3 stables and a barn, a horse and two mares, eight oxen, a bull, six cows, four calves, four pigs, 2 ploughs, two harrows, two carts, and fifteen acres under cultivation. By 1849 the John Hourie Sr. family may have been downsizing, as they had gone down to twelve acres under cultivation, a horse, a mare, a calf, two pigs, 3 sheep, and a plough, a cart, and a harrow.⁹⁵ It is not clear when Margaret died, census records consistently show a married woman in the family up to 1849, and the family does not appear in the partial record of the 1856 census. It is possible that she might have been the “Mary Hourie” who was buried on the 9th of September 1847, age 60 years. John passed away in 1857.⁹⁶

https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_t13898/1151?r=0&s=3. Accessed 10 May 2021.

⁹⁵ HBCA, E.4/1b folio 213, Extracts from registers of baptisms, marriages and burials in Rupert's Land sent to the Governor and Committee, marriage of John Howrie and Margaret; E.5/1 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown, 1827, Hourie, John; E.5/8 (H2-136-1-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1835; E.5/9 (H2-033-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement; E.5/9 (H2-033-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1838; E.5/10 (H2-033-2), Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1840; P7537/4, Red River Census 1846-1847; P7537/5, Red River Census 1849; HBCA E.4/1b, f 236d, Extracts from registers of baptisms, marriages and burials in Rupert's Land sent to the Governor and Committee, “John Howrie and Janet Dennet.” In her scrip application, “Jessie” Howrie, born 1815 indicated that her parents were William and Margaret Dennett, Scrip affidavit for Hourie, Jessie; born: 1815; husband: John Hourie Sr.; father: Wm. Dennett (Scot); mother: Sophia Ballantyne (Cree Indian); claim no: 999; scrip no: 7570 to 7577; amount: \$160; date of issue: July 30, 1876, at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/CollectionSearch/Pages/record.aspx?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=1501570&new=-8585837796360657264>, accessed 10 May 2021.

⁹⁶ HBCA E.4/2, f 153, Extracts from registers of baptisms, marriages and burials in Rupert's Land sent to the Governor and Committee, #276, “Mary Hourie”; LAC, Index to Kipling Collection, item 4447, “Hourie, John, burial 1857-08-18, age 87 years, St. Andrew's Church, at <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/vital-statistics-births-marriages-deaths/births-marriages-deaths-recorded/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=4447&>, accessed 10 May 2021.

The HBC and Slavery in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century

The historiographical picture along the Northwest Coast is in many ways quite similar to the areas already discussed. While there has been little work on a broad synthesis of the intersections between the fur trade and slavery in the region, historians do agree that fur traders on the Northwest Coast of North America participated in slavery. During the nineteenth century the HBC on the West Coast found itself located at the point where imperial changes to chattel slavery, especially emancipation, and western political battles in the form of territorial disputes with the United States, collided with local practices in labour and slavery. The Company's solution to these conflicting demands did not entirely disconnect it from the practices of slavery.

Opposing positions: Herbert Beaver and William A. Slacum

To date, much of what has been published on the topic of fur trade slavery in the Pacific Northwest has been based on documents created by two of the men most oppositional to the Hudson's Bay Company at the time, the Anglican HBC chaplain the Reverend Herbert Beaver, and the American naval purser and diplomat, William A. Slacum. Both men, as Adele Perry's article "Vocabularies of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: The North American Fur-Trade and the Imperial World" shows, deployed the language and sentiments of the period surrounding slavery and antislavery to expand their own networks of support and promote their own interests, in essence weaponizing, each in their own way, Britain's 1833 *Slavery Abolition Act*.⁹⁷ In doing this, their narratives of fur trade slavery threatened larger colonial narratives that positioned the British Empire as beneficent and the monopolistic Company as in opposition to freedom not only in a business but also in a very intimate sense. Hudson's Bay Company responses to Beaver and Slacum's accusations were predictably focused on trying to contain the damage these claims were doing, balanced by concerns about what a frank prohibition against slavery in the region might do to their operations on the ground. Yet amid the rhetorical thrusts and parries, documents generated by Beaver and Slacum, and by HBC officials in response, provide a small glimpse of the intersections of slavery and the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest.

⁹⁷ Perry, "Vocabularies of Slavery and Anti-Slavery."

Herbert Beaver's path to his positions as HBC chaplain and abolitionist writer is a curious one. During a trip to Britain in 1835, George Simpson personally selected the Anglican clergyman Herbert Beaver for the post of HBC chaplain to Fort Vancouver.⁹⁸ While Simpson's reasons for selecting Beaver are not clear, it is possible they may have had, at least in part, something to do with Beaver's connection to the West Indies. A few years after his ordination, in 1825, Beaver had left England for St. Lucia where he laboured as both a military garrison chaplain and as a civilian minister to the small protestant population on the island. By his own account, and confirmed by parish records, he remained there for over eight years, acting as both chaplain and minister until sometime in 1833 when he seems to have been replaced in his civilian capacity at some point in the spring, leaving the island later that year to return to England.⁹⁹ During his time in St. Lucia, Beaver owned a number of slaves, including a young person named John "aka William," and an adult named Thomas Chase. He purchased John/William, who would have been about fourteen at the time, from a Mr. Jackson in 1830. His purchase of John/William is documented in a case heard before the Vice-Admiralty Court in St. Lucia where Beaver prevailed in a claim that John /William had been illegally seized from him by the Collector of Customs, Charles Chipchase, on the supposition that his former owner, Jackson, had brought John/William to St. Lucia from Barbados improperly. Beaver had lost a previous attempt in court to invalidate the seizure of John/William before this successful appeal to the Vice-Admiralty Court. While he prevailed in this second attempt, John/William was not restored to him. There is evidence, however, of Beaver receiving compensation in the amount of 80 pounds for "a Slave" sometime in 1834.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Jesset, "introduction," in Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838*, xiii.

⁹⁹ G. Hollis Slater, "New Light on Herbert Beaver," *British Columbia. Historical Quarterly*, VI (1942), 13-29, 18.

¹⁰⁰ *Papers Presented to Parliament by His Majesty's Command, in Explanation of the Measures Adopted by His Majesty's Government, for the Melioration of the Condition of the Slave Population in the West Indies, on the Continent of South America, and at the Mauritius*, Volume 241 Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords, 1828, 139; *Selection of Reports and Papers of the House of Commons: Finance*; [1], Volume 25, 1836, 86; *Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers*, Volume 26, Great Britain: Parliament, House of Commons, H.M. Stationery Office, 1833, 13, 16; "Admiralty Court, Wednesday, March 21, [1833], In the Matter of a Slave – John, otherwise William." *The Times* (London), 22 March 1833, 4.

British parliamentary papers suggest that Beaver might have sold Thomas Case's wife, Queen Chase, and her children to a John Castles, while keeping or selling and then buying back Thomas Chase. A "slave marriage" record for the 23rd of June 1827 shows Herbert Beaver as the owner of Thomas Chase and Queen. An article published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1833 decrying the large number of slave seizures in St. Lucia in the early 1830s claimed that "a slave named Thomas, and a female named Queen, and her child Betsey," had been "legally brought from Barbados by a Mr. Gordon who had, at the request of the Rev. Mr. Beaver of St. Lucia, agreed to sell the female in question to him, in order that Mr. Beaver might marry her to Thomas, with whom she had cohabited." Parliamentary reports, recounted in *The Anti-slavery Reporter*, indicate that around 1828 or 1829, "Thomas Chase, and his wife, Queen, belonging to Mr. Castill, of the 35th Regiment," had been "found guilty of insubordination and disobedience." Although Queen, who was pregnant at the time, avoided punishment, her husband Thomas Chase was "condemned to 40 lashes and three months cachot [incarceration in a "dungeon"]." Records also indicate that Chipchase seized Queen and her child Betsey Christian from Castles around the same time that he seized John/William and Thomas Chase from Beaver. As a result of this seizure and the resulting condemnation of the sale of Queen as a slave, two more of Queen's children, James Kid, and Matilda, were considered to have been "born after illegal importation of their mothers," and were subsequently "made free."¹⁰¹ Although it is not clear the entire extent of Beaver's involvement of the lives of his slaves, in addition to the frank fact that he not only owned human beings, but went to court not once but twice to try to recover one of them or his financial value, from the records he seems to have also been involved in breaking up Thomas Chase and Queen's young family by owning Thomas Chase, but not Queen and her children.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Zachary Macaulay, *The Anti-slavery Reporter*, vol. 4, (Britain: London Society for the Mitigation and Abolition of Slavery in the British Dominions, 1831), 375; "Admiralty Court, Wednesday, March 21, [1833], In the Matter of a Slave – John, otherwise William." *The Times* (London), 22 March, 1833, 4; Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 26, (Great Britain: Parliament, House of Commons, H.M. Stationery Office, 1833), 13, 16; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 34, (Blackwood, 1833), 631.

¹⁰² Edmund B. d' Auvergne suggests in an unreferenced statement that Beaver may have been involved in the death of one of his slaves. See: Edmund B. d' Auvergne, *Human Livestock: An Account of the Share of the English-Speaking Peoples in the Development, Maintenance and Suppression of Slavery and the Slave Trade* (London: Grayson & Grayson, 1934), 134.

As is the case with so many enslaved people, it has not been possible to trace what happened to John/William or the Chase family after their seizure.

Beaver arrived at Fort Vancouver on the 16th of September 1836, and, before stepping off the ship, set a tone that would define his tenure thereafter by requesting officials move the “half breed women,” including Chief Factor Dr. John McLoughlin’s wife, away so he and his wife could move safely. Throughout the time Beaver remained in the territory, he and McLoughlin would continue to clash.¹⁰³ By November of 1836, Beaver was writing to the HBC’s deputy governor, Benjamin Harrison, about a range of concerns, including what he framed as slavery countenanced and even practiced by the Company. As Perry has shown, some of this framing was perhaps, at least for the period, hyperbole. Positioning the relative unfreedom of indentured servants as equivalent to the plantation slavery Britain had just outlawed, Beaver wrote

A general discontent pervades their inferior servants, who, poor things, expect from me much more than I can do for them. They are ill-treated, especially in the article of food. I have seen more real slavery in the short time I have been here, than in the eight years and a half I was in the West Indies. There are also Indians, but I cannot say correctly the number, I think about forty, held in actual bondage, having been purchased by persons of all classes in the Establishment.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Thomas E. Jesset, "Herbert Beaver (1800-1858): First Anglican Clergyman West of the Rocky Mountains." *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 16, no. 4 (1947): 413-32. Accessed October 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42971946>, 415; Stephen Woolworth, ""The School Is under My Direction": The Politics of Education at Fort Vancouver, 1836-1838." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (2003): 228-51. Accessed October 11, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20615320>, 235, 245, 247.

¹⁰⁴ Herbert Beaver’s First Letter to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, Nov 15, 1836, in Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838*, 20.

In his second letter to Harrison, written in January 1837, Beaver added “I have ascertained the number of slaves to be Eight, belonging to Officers of the Company, and twenty four to the Common Men; some having been parted with.”¹⁰⁵

The Governor and Committee in London reacted to Beaver’s letter in November 1837 by writing to James Douglas that

We were in hopes you would ere now have been successful in your endeavours to put an end to the inhuman and disgraceful traffic in slaves among the Indians frequenting the Establishments. We are exceedingly anxious for the accomplishment of this object, and that the condition of that much oppressed and injured race, whose suffering at times are shocking to humanity, should be ameliorated. We are aware that many of the native Indian women, the wives of our servants, still retain the slaves they brought with them from their respective tribes. We have to desire that your best endeavours be used to obtain emancipation of those slaves.¹⁰⁶

By this point, McLoughlin was on leave, and Douglas was left the task of navigating a path through the fallout that Beaver’s letters had caused. While Beaver could draw on his time in the West Indies to frame the practices overseen by McLoughlin as “slavery,” as Perry has shown, with his own complicated and intimate relationships to both the West Indies and slavery, as well

¹⁰⁵ Herbert Beaver’s Second Letter to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, Jan 18, 1837, in Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838*, 28, 30.

¹⁰⁶ George Simpson and Frederick Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal Entitled 'Remarks Connected with the Fur Trade in the Course of a Voyage from York Factory to Fort George and Back to York Factory, 1824-25', with Related Documents*. (London: Belknap P., of Harvard U.P Distributed by Oxford U.P, 1968), Appendix B: Governor and Committee to James Douglas, 15 November 1837, HBC Gen. Letter Book No. 624, 352-353.

as to questions of race and empire, James Douglas was treading on even more delicate ground than McLoughlin.¹⁰⁷

I am most anxious, and have taken some steps toward the attainment of that object. I regret however that the state of feeling amongst the natives of this river precludes every prospect of the immediate extinction of slavery, unless we resort to the very objectionable plan of a forcible emancipation. With the natives I have hitherto endeavoured to discourage the practice by the exertion of moral influence alone, carefully avoiding direct collision either with their selfish feelings or inveterate prejudices, as I do not feel justified in exposing our interests to the shock of excitement and desperate animosity which more active measures on our part might provoke. Against our own people I took a more active part, and denounced slavery as a state contrary to law, tendering to all unfortunate persons held as slaves by British subjects the fullest protection in the enjoyment of their natural rights. I soon after seized a favourable opportunity of putting the law in force by rescuing a runaway slave boy, who had been overtaken by his pursuers and brought here for punishment. He has since enjoyed his liberty and served the Company as a free labourer.

These proceedings, so clearly destructive of the principle of slavery, would have roused a spirit of resistance in any people who know the value of liberty; but I am sorry that the effect has been scarcely felt here....¹⁰⁸

While Douglas's response indicates how much he was feeling the pressure to follow the directions of his masters in London, and at the same time trying to avoid major labour disruptions at home, it also clearly shows that the slave's pursuers had every expectation that,

¹⁰⁷ Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁸ Simpson, Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, Appendix B, Governor and Committee to James Douglas, 15 November 1837, HBC Gen. Letter Book No. 624, 353.

when they arrived at the fort, the authority of the Company would back them up and return the slave, properly chastened, to them.¹⁰⁹

In October of 1838, Beaver sent his fifth report, which included a rebuttal of Company claims that the slaves he had identified as belonging to HBC employees in fact belonged to those men's wives, and that, as a consequence, were out of the reach of the Company.

Without wishing to discuss the propriety or expediency, in a moral or political point of view, of possessing, or permitting to be possessed the other class of persons, to which I directed your attention, namely, the slaves I have only to state that respecting them, with which I am more professionally concerned; that, being utterly deprived by reason of that ignorance, for the removal of which no steps during their present most abject degradation can be taken, they materially add, as will readily be supposed, to the existing depravity of our society. While traffic is carried on in the persons of these wretched outcasts, and authority assumed over them by servants of the Honorable Company, it is a vain excuse to say, that they belong to the Indian women, who are living with their Masters, and to whom the custom of the country concedes the right of retaining them in slavery. That they should not be so retained by the Company or their servants, admits of no question; but I maintain further, that not even women, so living, ought to be allowed so to retain them; nor should they be suffered to reside in any of your houses, over which, at least, as belonging to yourselves, you can exercise whatever control you please. Your men should be strictly forbidden to make use of their services in any

¹⁰⁹ This is supported by the story of an 1829 negotiation between William Connolly, James Douglas' son in law, and a group of Clatsop, in which he was willing to accept slaves as part of restitution: "Mr. Connolly sent a message to the Clatsops demanding restitution of the property to which they replied they would restore all they yet had and pay by giving us slaves for what they had appropriated to themselves and requested us not to land. "Oregon Pioneers," biography: Francis Ermatinger, part 2, available at: <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/bios/FrancisErmatinger2.pdf> . Accessed 12 December 2020.

way; and they should, by every practical method, be kept away from your establishment and its environs.¹¹⁰

The second individual to vex HBC officials was William Slacum. Slacum was an American naval purser who, acting under commission from President Andrew Jackson, arrived in Hudson Bay territory on the West Coast late in December of 1836, amid the ongoing dispute between Britain and the United States over where the boundary of the Oregon Territory should lie. He reached Fort Vancouver 2 January 1837, where, although it was clear to all that Slacum was a spy, HBC officials were courteous and accommodating.¹¹¹

In his published memorial, Slacum deployed patriarchal assumptions about authority and family structures alongside tropes about miscegenation to argue that slaves not only must belong to the husbands of the fur trade families that owned them, but that they were in fact part of a larger picture of Company-supported miscegenation destined to swell the ranks of a “half-breed” class of people inevitably suited to hunting and trapping rather than civilized life, and therefore of material use to the HBC. Slacum was probably inspired by Beaver’s reports, as he had actually carried Beaver’s second report to Harrison himself.¹¹²

As long as the Hudson Bay Company permit their servants to hold slaves, the institution of slavery will be perpetuated, as the price, eight to fifteen blankets, is too tempting for an Indian to resist. Many instances have occurred where a man has sold his own child. The chief factor at Vancouver says the slaves are the property of the women with whom their workmen live, and do not belong to men in their employ, although I have known cases to the contrary. We shall see how

¹¹⁰ Herbert Beaver’s Fifth Report, Fort Vancouver, October 2, 1838, in Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838*, 132.

¹¹¹ John Forsyth, William A. Slacum, “Slacum’s Report on Oregon, 1836-7.” *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, June 1912, 13: 2., 175, 182, 186; United States National Parks Service, Historic Handbook Series, Handbook volume 113, “Fort Vancouver: Fort Vancouver National Historic Site,” Washington, 1981, 82.

¹¹² Herbert Beaver’s Second Letter to Benjamin Harrison. Fort Vancouver, Jan 18, 1837, in Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838*, 28.

this reasoning applies. These women, who are said to be the owners of the slaves, are frequently bought themselves by the men with whom they live, when they are children; of course they have no means to purchase, until their husbands or *their men* make the purchase from the proceeds of their labour; and *then* these women are considered the ostensible owners, which neither lessens the traffic, nor ameliorates the condition of the slave, whilst the Hudson Bay Company find it to their interest to encourage their servants to intermarry or live with the native women, as it attaches the men to the soil, and their offspring (half breeds) become in their turn useful hunters and workmen at the different depots of the company, The slaves are generally employed to cut wood, hunt, and fish, for the families of the men employed by the Hudson Bay Company, and are ready for any extra work. Each man if the trapping parties has from two to three slaves, who assist to hunt, and take care of the horses and camp; they thereby save the company the expense of employing at least double the number of men that would otherwise be required on these excursions.¹¹³

Beyond their political and personal motivations and attacks, both Slacum's and Beaver's reports, as well as Douglas' response, read alongside the questions raised by slave-owning women like Sayward Lestage and Ainse discussed earlier begs for a better understanding of how slave ownership by women in these contexts might have heightened social standing, extended networks and alliances, or otherwise contributed to a family's well being, as well, as we will see, possibly heightening the risk of violence around or to them. Slacum's patriarchal assertions and misidentification of what may well have been bride price for wives, assertions which allowed him to state that women could not have owned slaves because they could not have had the resources to purchase them on their own also begs the question of whether, under this colonial and patriarchal gloss, that was in fact the case. Could slave ownership be a profitable way of exploring fur trade women's economic power and authority? The stories of three slave-owning fur trade families press these questions.

¹¹³ William A. Slacum, *Memorial of William A. Slacum*, (Washington: Blair & Rives), 10.

“Enquire about these things and write me what you know:”¹¹⁴ Slavery in the Pacific Northwest beyond Beaver and Slacum

In September of 1835, even before Herbert Beaver or William Slacum’s interventions, John McLoughlin was already attempting to deal with slavery under his watch. Writing to the Fort George postmaster John Dunn¹¹⁵ from Fort Vancouver, McLoughlin noted that it had been brought to his attention that “Pisk” [Thomas Pisk Kipling] had eleven slaves. Wondering aloud how Kipling could have come upon the property necessary to afford so many slaves, McLoughlin went on to direct Dunn to “Enquire about these things and write me what you know and send Pisk with your answer, his Slaves can bring him up. None of the peoples wives of the place are to be allowed to have any Slaves about the Establishment,” McLoughlin concluded.¹¹⁶

The apparent involvement of Kipling and his wife in slavery in this context raises important questions about who owned slaves in the West Coast fur trade, and how this may have impacted larger webs of relationships. Born In Rupert’s Land, Thomas Pisk Kipling had been an HBC servant since 1821, first in the area around Red River, and then, after a year free, beginning in 1828, in the HBC’s Columbia District.¹¹⁷ In his *Metis Dictionary of Biography*, Lawrence Barkwell writes that Kipling married Nancy "Margaret" Plouffe dite Villebrun, the daughter of

¹¹⁴ HBCA B.223/b/11, f 45d-46, Fort Vancouver Correspondence Book, 1834 - 1836. Richard Mackie indicates Kipling was terminated for his slave ownership, however, there is no indication of this in his HBCA biography, and McLoughlin’s letter seems only to suggest Kipling was summoned to explain himself, it does not indicate the outcome of this summons. Mackie, *Trading beyond the Mountains*, 304.

¹¹⁵ “Fort George,” in Judith Hudson Beattie and Helen M. Buss. *Undelivered Letters to Hudson's Bay Company Men on the Northwest Coast of America, 1830-57* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 417.

¹¹⁶ HBCA B.223/b/11, f 45d-46, Fort Vancouver Correspondence Book, 1834 - 1836. Richard Mackie indicates Kipling was terminated for his slave ownership, however, there is no indication of this in his HBCA biography, and McLoughlin’s letter seems only to suggest Kipling was summoned to explain himself, it does not indicate the outcome of this summons. Mackie, *Trading beyond the Mountains*, 304.

¹¹⁷ HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Kipling, Thomas Pisk,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/k/kipling_thomas-pisk.pdf. Accessed 12 December 2020.

Louis Plouffe dit Villebrun and Marie-Anne Collets, a Red River Metis family.¹¹⁸ If reports of Kipling owning slaves were correct, this family challenges the idea that slaves held in West Coast fur trade families always came through or were owned by Indigenous wives who were familiar with, often born into, the local cultural practices of slavery.

In his “Remarks Connected with the Fur Trade in the Course of a Voyage from York Factory to Fort George and Back to York Factory 1824-25,” George Simpson gave a description of female slave ownership along the coast. Despite Simpson’s obvious biases and misrecognitions, the description is an important reminder of the need for further research into how gendered slave ownership among Indigenous and fur trade communities may have contributed to status, community standing, and the extension of vital networks of connection.

Several of the Flat Head Women at the Establishment keep Female Slaves and it was the practise to allow them be let out among the newly arrived Servants for the purpose of prostitution; indeed the Princess of Wales (Mr McKenzies Woman) carried on this shameful traffick to a greater extent than any other having 8 or 10 female Slaves, it is now however broke off altho with some difficulty all the Women in the Fort having come to a resolution that they would not conform to this innovation as it deprived them of a very important source of Revenue. These Wretched Slaves often change proprietors two or three times in the course of a Season and when they escape a violent Death they are brought to a premature end by Disease when they are left a prey to the Dogs & crows as they are denied the ordinary burial. Our remonstrances with the Chiefs however begin to have the effect of ameliorating the situation of those dreadfully oppressed people and

¹¹⁸ Lawrence Barkwell, *Metis Dictionary of Biography*, available at https://www.academia.edu/38970180/Metis_Dictionary_of_Biography_Volume_H_to_K. Accessed 12 December 2020; "Alexander Lattie's Fort George Journal, 1846." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (1963): 197-245. Accessed October 11, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20612749>, 211.

Casseno the next Man to Concomely in the River shews his respect for the Whites by kind treatment of his Slaves.¹¹⁹

The “Mr. McKenzie” in Simpson’s description was fur trade clerk Alexander McKenzie, a former North Wester who had been stationed at Fort George when it had been in the North West Company’s Columbia Department in 1820. He survived the 1821 merger between the NWC and the HBC and remained on the West Coast afterwards. The wife Simpson was referring to was a daughter of the Chief Comcomly, sometimes referred to as “the Princess of Wales.”

McKenzie’s story highlights the violence and potential violence that attended slavery. It would be only a few years later that McKenzie would be dead, killed in a violent altercation with a group of Clallam, and his wife held hostage by them. The cause or causes of these events have been speculated on by historians, although no clear answer has been identified. It is possible but not certain that the Clallam were concerned about the HBC trading with rival groups, however, in her book *Fort Langley Journals*, Morag Maclachlan suggests that at least part of the reason for the altercation may have been an issue with the slaves owned by “The Princess of Wales.” “A woman of wealth,” writes Maclachlan, “she possessed many slaves, some of whom may have been Clallam.” The end to the story was a brutal retaliatory attack by a party of HBC men that decimated the Clallam group holding “The Princess of Wales” hostage, and finally freeing her.¹²⁰ Read alongside Blackhawk, the consequences of interventions made by fur traders, the knitting together of cultures in some places, and the rending of the fabric of life in others that these

¹¹⁹ Simpson, Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 101. [Clerk Alexander *McKenzie* married Concomely's favourite daughter, named by traders the "*Princess of Wales*," n.144, 87]; HBCA Biographical Sheet: “McKenzie, Alexander” available at: https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_alexander1812-1827.pdf; R. Harvey Fleming and Harold Adams Innis, *Minutes of Council, Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1821-31* (London: Champlain Society, 1940), 447.

¹²⁰ Morag Maclachlan and Wayne P. Suttles, *The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 213-214; George Simpson and E. E. Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson, Esqr., Governor of Ruperts Land, to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, March 1, 1829: Continued and Completed March 24 and June 5, 1829* (Toronto, ON: Champlain Society, 1947), 42, 76, 106-107.

interventions could precipitate, as well as the parts played by women in these events beg for more nuanced attention.

In 1841 Herbert Beaver was credited as the source of a report in *Proceedings of the General Anti-slavery Convention* that included detailed information about slavery under the HBC on the West Coast. According to Beaver, among the Hudson's Bay Company's own and their employees' slaves, there was one working at a Company farm about twenty miles from Fort Vancouver, and a slave employed as domestic servant at the residence of the "officer in charge," presumably McLoughlin, who was later put to general work and who was frequently maltreated. "An Indian boy, named 'Dick'" Beaver stated, was owned by James Douglas, who had purchased him from "an Orkney man named George Burgar." A George Burgar appears in the HBCA's Servants contracts as a sailor sailing to York Factory in 1830. Beaver claimed that Douglas had once beaten "Dick" severely. The fur trader Donald Manson, who owned a slave named "Tom," whom Beaver claimed had been beaten badly by the master of the Company steamer *Beaver* for accidentally scalding the master's dog was also included in the report. In May of 1835 William Tolmie wrote in his journal "Mr. Manson purchased a man slave from the Weetleoch about a fortnight ago." The list of items Manson had used to pay for this man included gunpowder, balls, and "1 Trading Gun – much worn." "The slave named Tom," Tolmie continued, "was employed with the people & occasionally in hunting." Tom had, Tolmie noted, returned from an unsuccessful hunting trip the night before, and apparently disappeared. Local opinion was, stated Tolmie, that Tom had "either runaway in company w^h a female slave or gone to spend a day or two with her." Two days after his disappearance, Tolmie noted, "No appearance of Tom."¹²¹

Donald Manson was born in Thurso, Caithness in 1798. Entering the HBC's service in 1817, he worked in and around York Factory, Ile a la Crosse, and on several western expeditions before settling in the Columbia District in the early 1820s. Remarks about him by other fur traders show

¹²¹*Proceedings of the General Anti-slavery Convention*, vol. 1, (British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, 1841), 330-331; HBCA Servants Contracts, Burgar, George, HBCA A.32/22 f 440; British Columbia Archives (BCA), File MS-0557.5.2 - William Fraser Tolmie diary [typescript x2], Private Diary of William Fraser Tolmie, August 1833 – December 1835, typescript, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1939, 216 [sic], 263.

him as more suited to travel and discovery than a sedentary life. He married Félicité Lucier in 1828.¹²² Félicité Lucier was the daughter of Etienne Lucier, a French Canadian from Boucherville QC, and Josephette Nouette, who, historians have speculated, based on her last name, may have been Kwakuitl.¹²³ The mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous history expressed in Félicité Lucier's family, her French Canadian and possibly Kwakuitl roots, again draw into question whether the experiences of all Indigenous women in slave-owning fur trade families could have been homogenous, and if not, how the differences in experiences and culture may have been experienced and expressed in different contexts.

The preceding discussion is far from exhaustive. Other examples of the intersections between slavery and the HBC on the West Coast include at least two slaves, a boy and a girl, who each separately made a bid for freedom from Francis Noel Annance's wife at Fort Langley. Jean Barman identifies Annance's wife at the time as a "Flathead woman." In both of these cases, while the journalist, almost certainly the by then Chief Trader Archibald McDonald, identifies the slaves as belonging to Annance's wife, once they had run away their recovery and final fate became the concern of the HBC's establishment and hierarchy. In late October of 1828, a "Slave Boy belonging to Mr. Annance's woman had decamped & with Annance's Rifle too," wrote MacDonald. "Indians on the beach (among them Mr. Manson's brother-in-law) were immediately dispatched and Soon returned with the fugitive," he continued. When the "Slave Boy" could not produce the rifle, tensions rose, and McDonald "was about demonstrating to him with a drawn Sword how I would cut off his head if it was not found." Fortunately, it turned out that Annance had misplaced the weapon himself. "The Chap however had to run the gauntlet and among the other dreadful punishments he was to Suffer, a rope was put round his neck, and [he] was to have been hung to the Flagstaff for the heinous Crime of opening the Gate in the dead

¹²² HBCA Biographical Sheet: "Manson, Donald.," available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/m/manson_donald.pdf . Accessed 12 December 2020; Kenneth L. Holmes, "MANSON, DONALD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/manson_donald_10E.html

¹²³ Carolyn Patricia McAleer, "Patterns from the Past: Exploring Gender and Ethnicity through Historical Archaeology among Fur Trade Families in the Willamette Valley of Oregon," M.A. Thesis, Oregon State University, Applied Anthropology, 2003, 71-72.

of night,” wrote McDonald. “A display of this kind was necessary, & with much appearance of Sincerity in the eyes of the women of the Fort– I think the little fellow will not risk his neck a second time,” he concluded.¹²⁴ In light of these sorts of interventions, it is small wonder that slave owners would have had brought a slave before James Douglas expecting him to support them and punish their slave.

Despite the considerable show of force brought to bear against the Annance’s slave boy, the family’s difficulties with runaways continued. In early January 1829, “a little Slave Girl belonging to Mr. Annance’s woman disappeared,” wrote McDonald. A group who had been trading at the post “were suspected, pursued & brought back with the prize by five of our men,” he noted. “An old woman, who appeared to be the mother made a doleful appeal to our humanity for the offence.” Although McDonald indicated to the woman that the little girl was not his to return to her, he nonetheless intervened, telling her “that I should procure her freedom for 10 Beaver Skins & that until they Came back with the Beaver her daughter would be taken good care of.” Even as this was happening, the man who had sold the child, “the Scamp Ni,ca.mous – the Quaitline Chief; that traded the girl here without I believe Coming by her himself in the most lawful manner,” arrived, wrote McDonald. Once again, the HBC was involved in the mechanics of slavery, some of its men were sent to return the young slave to the fort, and McDonald seemed willing to personally broker her return to her family, albeit on the condition that they had to pay over ten beaver skins.¹²⁵

Fort George in the 1820s offers other examples of enslaved people enmeshed in HBC operations. The Fort George District Report for 1824-1825 identified a number of traders whose families included slaves in a “List of Men attached to Fort George District ... Winter 1824/52 with their wives and familys.” Built by John Jacob Astor’s short-lived Pacific Fur Company (PFC) in 1811, Fort George, originally known as Astoria, was acquired by the NWC in 1813 when it bought out

¹²⁴ Maclachlan and Suttles, *The Fort Langley Journals*, 82; Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press 2015), 99; Jean Murray Cole, “McDONALD, ARCHIBALD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 23, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_archibald_8E.html.

¹²⁵ Maclachlan and Suttles, *The Fort Langley Journals*, 92-93.

the PFC and took in many of its employees, themselves often previously Nor' Westers. When the NWC and HBC amalgamated in 1821, the post became part of the HBC, continuing to operate as Fort George.¹²⁶ In 1825, when the HBC opened Fort Vancouver as its new headquarters in the region, Fort George became a minor post under the charge of Donald Manson.¹²⁷

Sometime in the early 1820s at least one attempt was made to free the slaves belonging to the wives of HBC employees at Fort George. In an 1840s report, “Remarks upon Mr. Cushing’s Report,” a response to accusations by a United States senator, Caleb Cushing, who, based largely on Slacum’s report, had accused the HBC of supporting slavery, John McLoughlin noted that some years earlier “J. Dugald Cameron, Esq. had emancipated the slaves of the wives of the servants and sent them from the place.” Despite these efforts, wrote McLoughlin, and “though he did this with a view to ameliorate their situation it proved the reverse, as the servants wives made a present of them to their Indian relations.” Thus, McLoughlin stated, the situation of the slaves became even worse than it had been when they were living at the fort.¹²⁸ NWC partner John Dougald Cameron had survived the amalgamation of the NWC and HBC, serving as Chief Factor in charge of the Columbia District, its headquarters at the time, at Fort George. Cameron was transferred to Rainy Lake in 1824, suggesting that his efforts at emancipation were probably undertaken at some point between 1821 and 1824.¹²⁹

Cameron’s reported emancipation of the slaves belonging to Company spouses raises questions about whose slaves were enumerated in the 1824-1825 report. The report identified “Thirty

¹²⁶ Mackey, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 14-17; HBCA archival description, “Columbia District.” Available at http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/PAM_AUTHORITY/AUTH_DESC_DET_REP/SISN%20856?sessionsearch. Accessed on 24 December 2020.

¹²⁷ Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 323.

¹²⁸ HBCA B.223/b/33 f 55- f 56d Columbia District Correspondence Book, 1843 – 1845, ca 1845, John McLoughlin, “Remarks upon Mr. Cushing’s Report, from the Committee on foreign affairs to which was referred a message from the President of the United States, together, with a resolution of the House, in relation to the Territory of the United States, beyond the Rocky Mountains.”

¹²⁹ Sylvia Van Kirk, “CAMERON, JOHN DUGALD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 24, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cameron_john_dugald_8E.html.

seven including Officers,” at the post who were a charge on Fort George directly. “Attached to the above number of Officers & Men there are 37 Women 35 Children & 11 Slaves harboured about the Fort, but no Provision is served out of the Stor to Women or Children except to those of the Officers, an account of which is regularly Kept,” it explained. The list of men whose households included slaves ranged from officers to labourers. “Alex^r McKenzie, Trader,” “Thos. McKay, Ass^t Clerk &c.,” “[Jos^h] Cartt[ien] overseer of men,” “Michel La Framboise, Interpreter,” “Augustin [Russel] Blacksmith,” “J B^{le}. Perreault, House Carpenter,” “Joseph St. Martin, Labourer,” and “Michel Cotenvir, Labourer,” as well as “Cowenai, Sawyer,” and “James Coah, Labourer” were all noted as having slaves in their households. The list indicated that each man’s household had one slave, with the exception of Alexander McKenzie, who had two. Archibald McDonald, at the time post accountant, who was married to a daughter of Comcomly, Princess Raven, making him a relation by marriage to Alexander McKenzie, had no slaves beside his name.¹³⁰

How the report positioned enslaved individuals is interesting. In one part of the report, they were grouped with the “women and children,” in that they were “Attached to the above number of Officers & Men,” and were “harboured about the fort.” But throughout, the report was very careful to identify who at the fort, including officers and men, were charged to the post, and who to other establishments or, as in the cases of women and children, were not an expense to the Company. Yet the report does not include “slaves” with the groups of people who were not fed by the post, as it specifically did for the women and children. Also interesting, one of the HBC employees listed is Alexander McKenzie, who has already been mentioned as the man whose wife, George Simpson claimed, had eight or ten slaves at almost the same time this report was written. Here he was shown with only two slaves, raising the question as to whether this list of slaves in fact included all of the slaves in a household, whether it included those belonging to the women at the fort, and whether the slaves at the post belonging to the wives of HBC employees

¹³⁰ HBCA B.76/e/1, f 5, f8, Fort George District Report, 1824-1825; Jean Murray Cole, “McDONALD, ARCHIBALD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 23, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_archibald_8E.html.

had already been emancipated or their ownership transferred to other family members, in which case who were the owners of the slaves listed, the men or their wives?

Other men on the list were well-known fur trade names as well. Michel La Framboise, who formally married an Okanagan and French woman Emilie Picard in 1839,¹³¹ and Jean Baptiste Perreault, whose wife at this time was probably Angele Chehalis.¹³² Thomas McKay, was almost certainly the stepson of John McLoughlin. McKay had come with his father Alexander McKay when the senior McKay moved to the Pacific Northwest with John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company. Alexander died shortly after they arrived, and, following her husband's death, Thomas' mother, Marguerite Wadin McKay married John McLoughlin. Thomas McKay married three times. The wife in this list would probably have been his first wife, a daughter of Chief Comcomly, Princess Timmee, making McKay a relative by marriage to McKenzie and Archibald McDonald, and all three relatives to Comcomly. McKay and Princess Timmee had at least five children before her death around 1829 or 1830.¹³³

Douglas and McLoughlin's solution to the practice of slavery at the Company's posts under their charge did not disentangle the Company from the binds it found itself in in a post-emancipation world, and both McLoughlin and Douglas struggled to square the circle. "Of the persons ranking as slaves, some are children of tender age, others have grown up in ignorance of every useful art... by which they might have earned an independent livelihood, and all classes are so destitute and friendless, that they have without exception chosen the part of continuing with their present protectors," Douglas had written to the London Committee in 1838. "The plan I now follow, of considering every person without distinction, residing on our premises as free British subjects, who may at any time under the Company's protection, assert the exercise of their absolute and

¹³¹ Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women*, 358; HBCA Biographical Sheet, "Laframboise, Michel." Available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/l/laframboise_michel.pdf. Accessed on 23 December 2020.

¹³² Jetté, M. (2007). "We Have Almost Every Religion but Our Own": French-Indian Community Initiatives and Social Relations in French Prairie, Oregon, 1834-1837. *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 108 (2), 222-245, 230. Retrieved December 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20615740>.

¹³³ Lisa Philips, "Transitional Identities: Negotiating Social Transitions in the Pacific NW 1825-1860s," *The Canadian Political Science Review*, 2:2, June 2008, 21-40, 29.

legal rights, will greatly mitigate the evils of slavery, by operating as a security against abuse, and making affection the only bond that supports the immoral system,” he told them.¹³⁴

“Making affection the only bond that supports the immoral system:”¹³⁵ The HBC’s ongoing intersections with slavery

Things continued in this vein into the 1840s. In his “Remarks upon Mr. Cushing’s Report,” McLoughlin stated that the Company was still pursuing a policy of self-emancipation that had begun under James Douglas during McLoughlin’s absence in 1838. Given that some emancipated slaves did not always want to return to their homes, and in light of the issues John Dugald Cameron’s earlier attempts at emancipation had raised, McLoughlin reported, “as for me...I did not make the servants wives send their slaves away, but availed myself of every opportunity to make them work and pay as other Indians. The consequence is that our ploughing and harrowing is principally done by Indians and several of these Indians have claimed their liberty, in which I support them,” wrote McLoughlin. “If the plan we adopt is followed, they will before long emancipate themselves.” Despite saying that “We disapprove of anyone having slaves, and consider everyone about the Establishment as free,” in fact, even in the 1840s the HBC was employing individuals it knew to be enslaved. While some may have been able to use the money they had earned by working for the HBC to free themselves, the HBC remained enmeshed in the system of slavery.¹³⁶

In 1846, Roderick Finlayson, nephew of fur traders Duncan and Nicol Finlayson, used the ambiguity of the HBC’s approach to slavery to both obtain the services of an enslaved Indigenous man and remain on good trading terms locally. Finlayson had joined the HBC in

¹³⁴ Douglas to Gov. & Com, 18 Oct. 1838, H.B. Co. Journ. No. 1434, quoted in Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 354.

¹³⁵ Douglas to Gov. & Com, 18 Oct. 1838, H.B. Co. Journ. No. 1434, quoted in Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 354.

¹³⁶ HBCA B.223/b/33 f 55- f 56d Columbia District Correspondence Book, 1843 – 1845, ca 1845, John McLoughlin, “Remarks upon Mr. Cushing’s Report, from the Committee on foreign affairs to which was referred a message from the President of the United States, together, with a resolution of the House, in relation to the Territory of the United States, beyond the Rocky Mountains.”

1837 and was posted to the Columbia in 1839. In 1843 he was appointed second in command at Fort Victoria, and in 1844 placed in command of the post. On the 19th of July 1846, Finlayson recorded in the Fort Victoria journal that “The Natives of Cape Flattery left this evening ... Weena Cu mullu an Indⁿ slave from Mill bank but a Native of Kawitchin who followed the people from Ft. M^cL was employed here for some time last year he had visited the Clalums afterwards & was sold by them to a Cape Flattery Chief who claimed him as his property.” The problem was, wrote Finlayson, that “Weena Camallu not willing to accompany his new master back again deserted from him on his arrival here & hid himself in the woods behind. In order to secure the services of Weenna Camalla who is a very useful Indⁿ & at the same time keep on friendly terms with the Cape Flattery I had him reclaimed,” he explained. Finlayson paid “1 gun & 1 shot ... to his Cape Flattery owner. Wena Cumalla is to remain here employed until he is enabled to pay for the above articles out of the wages he receives,” explained Finlayson.¹³⁷ If the HBC was somehow facilitating Weenna Camalla’s self-emancipation, it had purchased him to do so, and his freedom was contingent on his first repaying the cost. In other areas, as well, the HBC continued to benefit from enslaved labour, including the hiring of enslaved persons through or with their owners.¹³⁸ While enslaved unfree labour associated with the HBC in the Pacific North West may have become more ambiguous following emancipation in the British Empire, it was certainly not absent. In a personal account book from the end of the 1840s, James Douglas penned a list of goals that included “The Moral renovation of the place; Abolition of slavery

¹³⁷ HBCA B.226/a/1 f 11 – 11d, Fort Victoria Post Journal, 1846 – 1850; Eleanor Stardom, “FINLAYSON, RODERICK,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 25, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/finlayson_roderick_12E.html.

¹³⁸ See, for instance, the example of the Iroquois freeman George Tewhattohewnie and his slave who worked to guide an HBC party in 1824. Jean Barman, *Iroquois in the West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 121; and see other examples in John Work’s journals, for instance, 8 April 1824: “Just as we were getting round one of the slaves who was hired from George the freeman, dropped down” quoted in Nellie B. Pipes, “The Journal of John Work March 21--May 14, 1825.” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1944): 138-46, 144. Accessed January 4, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20611544>.

within our limits; Lay down a principle and act upon it with confidence; The building of a church of Christ in this place.”¹³⁹

What is evident from these examples is that the ripples set in motion by the interventions of the fur trade, interventions that were never neutral, extended beyond the immediate fact of the enslavement of persons. Connections with chattel slavery involved connections with complex and far-reaching implications for the political landscape and for violence in that landscape. As in all of the other regions studied, fur trade interventions and the webs that connected them to the empire impacted Indigenous experiences. In "The Maritime Trade of the North Pacific Coast," James Gibson argues that the fur trade increased the incidence of slavery, and therefore the incidence of raids for captives around Puget Sound and the Fraser Valley.¹⁴⁰ These increased incidences could have had a number of implications. Writing about regions further east, Paul W. Mapp suggests that the effects of the involvements of fur traders in slavery in Northern North America may have had a range of impacts, from increasing mobility through slave raids and the movement of enslaved people, to curtailing mobility more generally by creating an atmosphere of insecurity. Jonathan Carver, writes Mapp, “opined that the French purchase of Indian slaves, ‘instead of being the means of preventing cruelty and bloodshed, Only caused the dissensions between Indian nations to be carried on with a greater degree of violence, and with unremitted ardor.’”¹⁴¹ Fur trade interventions in slavery on the West Coast may well have followed similar patterns, simultaneously increasing mobility in some ways, while decreasing it in others.

Conclusions

The impulse to look away from the story of slavery in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s operations is an old one. As Richard Chan Smith argues, the narrative the Company constructed during the

¹³⁹ Quoted in B.A. McKelvie, “Sir James Douglas: A new Portrait,” in *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 7, (Victoria: Archives of British Columbia, 1943), 93 – 102.

¹⁴⁰ J.R. Gibson, "The Maritime Trade of the North Pacific Coast." in *History of Indian-White Relations: Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 4, Wilcomb Washburn, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution), 375-90, 390; John Belshaw. *Becoming British Columbia: A Population History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 85.

¹⁴¹ Paul W. Mapp *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Books, 2012), 254.

eighteenth century to support and promote its operations, a narrative that was entangled in and with British narratives of imperial expansion, was one of mutually beneficial cooperation that “united British manufactures with Indigenous suppliers in amity.”¹⁴² Passing from there through a historiography that has promoted the vision of Canada as a refuge from slavery without acknowledging its own slavery past, there is still a great deal to be learned through digging more deeply into histories of fur trade slavery. Questions around gender and culture and how these intersected with slavery have many implications for understanding the impact of the fur trade on slavery and on violence, and on subaltern lives more generally, while a better understanding of the historiography itself offers important insights into the assumptions we hold when we approach discussions surrounding race today. The story of the HBC’s intersections with slavery in the Pacific Northwest in particular highlights the fact that chattel slavery did not simply end. Vestiges of its racialized constructions and assumptions of power could continue on, repackaged as benevolence and necessary accommodation.

¹⁴² David Chan Smith, "The Hudson's Bay Company, Social Legitimacy, and the Political Economy of Eighteenth-Century Empire." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2018): 71-108. muse.jhu.edu/article/684978. 108.

Chapter Four: “The grounds and walks are joined to ours by a bridge:”¹ Spiders’ webs of relationship in the triangular trade

As has already been seen, the long filaments that formed the webs of relationships between slavery and slave ownership and the fur trade were not limited in their reach to North America. Nor were the connections that formed the complex networks of relationship that connected spaces where slavery flourished limited to the public realms of business and political interest. In a world where family and business were often inextricably enmeshed, family relationships could be the durable webs that supported personal and business movements throughout empires, forming the paths along which transatlantic businesses and family members could move. Fur traders were connected and supported by these webs as they operated in the complex transnational world of empire, while the webs themselves could provide paths along which colonial violence, including slavery, could travel.

From Scotland to Jamaica to Timiskaming: Aeneas Cameron’s networks and connections

The story of fur trader and Beaver Club member Aeneas Cameron is just one example of how interconnected business, family, fur trade and slavery could be. When Cameron arrived to work in the Timiskaming district fur trade for Richard Dobie, who, as we have already seen, was a fur trade slave owner, he had only recently arrived back in Canada from Jamaica, a trip that Dobie had sponsored. Cameron’s family connections with the island can be traced through his mother, Grace nee Grant, a sister of wealthy Jamaican plantation owner Francis Grant, and of John Grant of Glenloch, Chief Justice of Jamaica from 1783 to 1790. Shortly after Cameron’s arrival in Jamaica in 1786, he had written to his uncle Francis at Montego Bay about his career plans. His uncle replied that Cameron should consider working under him in “the planting line,” an offer Cameron does not appear to have taken up. But Cameron’s options were not only limited to Scotland or the West Indies. In the British North American fur trade, Cameron was related to

¹ “Lord Auckland to Lord Grenville, 2 October 1810,” in J. B. Fortescue. *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore*. vol. 10 (London: H.M.S.O., 1927), 53.

William Grant of Three Rivers, and connected to Dobie through Dobie's son-in-law John Grant, as well as to Grant's uncles in Jamaica, John and Francis Grant. Other connections through Aeneas Cameron's place of birth, Kirkmichael, which may not have involved close kinship may also have played a part in Cameron's fur trade career. Education and family connections, as Elaine Mitchell notes, were probably a significant factor in the terms of Cameron's first fur trade posting, as well as explaining his time in Jamaica.²

Slavery, relationship, and the Phyn, Ellice, Inglis, Richardson and Forsyth families

As with the Grants, Cameron, and Dobie, connections of affinity and consanguinity define the basic structure of the webs of family relationship that drew together the business operations of the Phyn, Ellice, Inglis, Richardson and Forsyth families and partnerships. In the five decades between the 1760s and 1820s, the firm of Phyn and Ellice, and its many variations, partnerships, family, and business relationships spread from Schenectady, New York, through Detroit, Michilimackinac, Montreal, London, South Carolina, and the West Indies. The firm's history can be traced to the surrender of Canada in 1760, and the subsequent upheavals and changes that resulted as Britain took over the region formerly governed by France. From at least 1763, James Phyn had been a part of a set of business relationships that brought together merchants James Sterling, John Duncan, and, in 1765, John Porteous, all of whom were in the business of shipping and selling merchandise from Schenectady to Detroit and later Michilimackinac. Rich notes that

² Elaine Allen Mitchell, *Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), xxiv, 35-38, 42; Elaine Allan Mitchell, "CAMERON, AENEAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 29, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cameron_aeneas_6E.html; Elaine Allan Mitchell, "Fort Timiskaming, A History," *The Beaver Magazine* (winter 1969), 18-23; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Francis Grant." Available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/1317639698>. Accessed 12 December 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "John Grant of Kilgraston." Available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146664097>. Accessed 12 December 2020.

“Without doubt, James Phyn supplied a part of the necessary funds upon joining the partnership just as, at a later date, Alexander Ellice was given a third share for the sum.” This partnership ended November 6th, 1767, when Duncan retired, and the firm became known as Phyn and Ellice.³

Under Phyn and Ellice’s leadership, the firm expanded rapidly, and by the fall of 1768, Alexander Ellice’s young brother Robert Ellice joined the Company. In December of 1769 Phyn and Ellice wrote to William and Alexander Forsyth of Huntley, from whom they had purchased merchandise. William and Alexander were related through the marriage of Phyn’s sister Jean to William Forsyth. “When will you send us over a few of your boys or don’t you choose they should become Americans?” Phyn and Ellice wrote to the Forsyths. Around 1779, John Forsyth, one of Phyn’s nephews emigrated, joining the family’s business interests and his brother Thomas, who was already working for the family enterprise. Over time, others from this family also emigrated and joined in the fur trade.⁴ John Richardson, the son of another sister of Phyn’s, was apprenticed to the Company in 1774.⁵ Richardson’s path to joining the Company, which Fleming characterizes as “typical,” offers insight into how much the webs of relationship and business could intersect, and, as with Aeneas Cameron, how these relationships could travel through female as well as male connections. In 1772, the Company’s Schenectady office wrote

³ R.H. Fleming, “Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady,” *Contributions to Canadian Economics*, 1932, vol. 4 (1932), 7-41, 15-16; Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, “FORSYTH, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/forsyth_john_7E.html; Col. E. Cruikshank, “The John Richardson Letters,” *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, vol vi, 1905, reprint 1975, 20-36, 20.

⁴ Fleming, “Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady,” 15-16; Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, “FORSYTH, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/forsyth_john_7E.html. Col. E. Cruikshank, “The John Richardson Letters,” *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, vol vi, 1905, reprint 1975, 20-36, 20; Trudel indicates that a William Forsythe of Detroit had 2 slaves in 1762, but it has not been possible to determine with certainty if he was related to the Phyns and other Forsyths at this point. Trudel, *Dictionnaire des esclaves et de leurs propriétaires*, 329.

⁵ F. Murray Greenwood, “RICHARDSON, JOHN (d. 1831),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/richardson_john_1831_6E.html.

to Alexander Ellice in London that “Mrs. Richardson has earnestly recommended a son of Mr. Richardson to our protection. James Phyn has wrote her that at present he can give no hopes. See the young man and give him and his friends a full description of this country and the nature of Business transacted after which they can best judge if it is proper to entertain any thoughts of his coming this way.” Richardson, who would join the business, arrived in New York in May of that year.⁶

As Phyn and Ellice and their related operations began to thrive, James Phyn married Ewertta Constable, daughter of Dr. John Constable, a close friend of Sir William Johnson.⁷ Over time, the firm partnered with John Porteous, focusing their activities on marketing trade goods and buying furs, while switching from the New York to the more lucrative and stable London market to sell those furs. Responding to restrictions on imports and exports, Phyn, Ellice and Porteous set up to move goods through Montreal in 1770, and by the mid-1770s, in an effort to concentrate capital, the firm broke with Porteous. When British North American importation restrictions collapsed in the later 1760s, the firm had set its sights on establishing a base in London, and in 1774 Phyn and his family left New York for that city. This turned out to be a fortuitous move in the face of the turbulence that followed in the region.⁸ Once again, the Company began moving its goods though Montreal instead of New York, eventually engaging the trader Isaac Todd, whose slave-dealing with Dobie and Frobisher has already been discussed,

⁶ Fleming, “Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady,” 7-41, 26.

⁷ R.H. Fleming notes that “William Constable, brother-in-law of James Phyn, in seeking a suitable career, weighed the possibilities of the Indian Trade against the attractions of the West Indies, but finally became an important member of the Phyn and Ellice organization at Detroit and Schenectady.” R.H. Fleming, “Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady,” 7-41, 7-10, 14, 26; Evelyn Pierrepont Bartow, *Bartow genealogy, containing every one of the name of Bartow descended from Doctor Thomas Bartow, who was living at Crediton, in England, A.D. 1672, with references to the books where any of the name is mentioned* (Baltimore: Innes & Co., Printers, 1878), 58.

⁸ R.H. Fleming, “Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady,” 7-41, 16-18, 21, 23, 27.

to handle their transshipment work in Montreal. With the onset of the American Revolution, trade was profoundly disrupted, forcing traders to look to the St. Lawrence route as an alternative.⁹

During the war, Phyn's nephew John Richardson took up a partnership with Porteous in Charlestown, S.C., shipping commodities such as "place indigo, rice, tobacco and other products," to Phyn in London, diversifying the products the Company marketed through their offices there. By the end of the war, the Company had fully entered the triangular trade, bringing in goods from the entire Atlantic seaboard, as well as from the West Indies. Following the war, the Company was able to retain its properties in Schenectady, but never really returned to the focus they had had there before the war, instead leveraging their existing business connections from the area. In 1779, with the business on a solid footing in Montreal, Alexander Ellice placed the Montreal operations of the Company in the hands of Robert Ellice and John Forsyth, who operated as Robert Ellice and Company.¹⁰ The Company continued to reorganize and regroup in the wake of the changes following the American War.

In London, Phyn and Ellice brought John Inglis in as a partner in 1787, renaming the Company Phyn, Ellices and Inglis. Inglis, who had worked for the Company for some time, had significant West Indian business connections. John Richardson, Phyn's nephew, was recalled to Montreal from Detroit in 1788 when Robert Ellice became too ill to work, and by 1790, the Montreal arm of the Company was operating as Forsyth, Richardson and Company, under which name it would continue until Thomas Forsyth retired in 1816, and Alexander Thain became a partner. Allaire Gratien notes that Thomas, another Thain who worked for the firm, may have been a nephew of Richardson and Forsyth, suggesting that Alexander, too, may have been a relation.¹¹ Between

⁹ R.H. Fleming, "Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady," 7-41, 28 -30, 34.

¹⁰ R.H. Fleming, "Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady," 7-41, 35-36.

¹¹ Gratien Allaire, "THAIN, THOMAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 3, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thain_thomas_6E.html; a largely unreferenced family tree on Ancestry.com suggests that both Alexander and Thomas were sons of John Thain and Anne Richardson. Ancestry index records show an Anne Richardson marrying a John Thain 5 Nov 1774, in Fordyce, Banff, Scotland. *Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561-1910* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 10 December 2020.

1787 and 1805, James Ellice, Robert Ellice, James Phyn, and Alexander Ellice all passed away. Despite the loss of capital this, as well as retirements from the firm, caused, the network of companies continued to operate. In 1804, acting as an agent for the NWC, Ellice attempted to purchase the HBC in an effort to amalgamate the larger fur trading concerns and thereby reduce competition and optimize business assets. In 1821, under Ellice's direction, the Company played a significant part in the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies.¹² In 1824, Ellice was named a director of the HBC, replacing John Halkett on the Committee.¹³

According to Wallace, James Phyn was a son of George Phyn, laird of the Corse of Monelly and his wife Janet Simpson. James Phyn's brother George married Alexander Ellice's sister. James Forsyth, John Forsyth's brother worked for the Company in North America and with Phyn, Inglis, and Ellice in London, while John Richardson was the son of John Richardson Sr. and another daughter of George Phyn Sr., making him cousin to John Forsyth and Edward Ellice, and nephew to James Phyn.¹⁴ Over time, various family members also married into other fur trade families, for instance, John Forsyth married the daughter of Charles Grant, and thus became a part of the extended Grant family and their business network. John and Margaret (Grant) Forsyth's children married into the Samuel Gerrard and John Gregory families.¹⁵ Figure 3 below

¹² R.H. Fleming, "Phyn, Ellice and Company of Schenectady," 7-41, 37, 39; City of Westminster Archives Centre, London, England; *Westminster Church of England Parish Registers*, Reference: SJSS/PR/4/11; James M. Colthart, "ELLICE, EDWARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice_edward_9E.html; Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, "FORSYTH, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/forsyth_john_7E.htm; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Alexander Ellice of Mark Lane," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146638519>. Accessed 12 December 2020.

¹³ HBCA, Annals: Subject index, A-C RG20/6a/24 Subject Index, A-C. My thanks to Tolly Bradford for sharing information about this record; James M. Colthart, "ELLICE, EDWARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 8, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice_edward_9E.html.

¹⁴ Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 437, 442, 492, 493.

¹⁵ Bruce G. Wilson, *Enterprises of Robert Hamilton: A Study of Wealth and Influence in Early Upper Canada, 1776-1812* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), 59; Peter Deslauriers, "GERRARD, SAMUEL," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 31, 2020,

shows a relationship network map of some of the connections between Phyn and Ellice, the fur trade, and the West Indies.

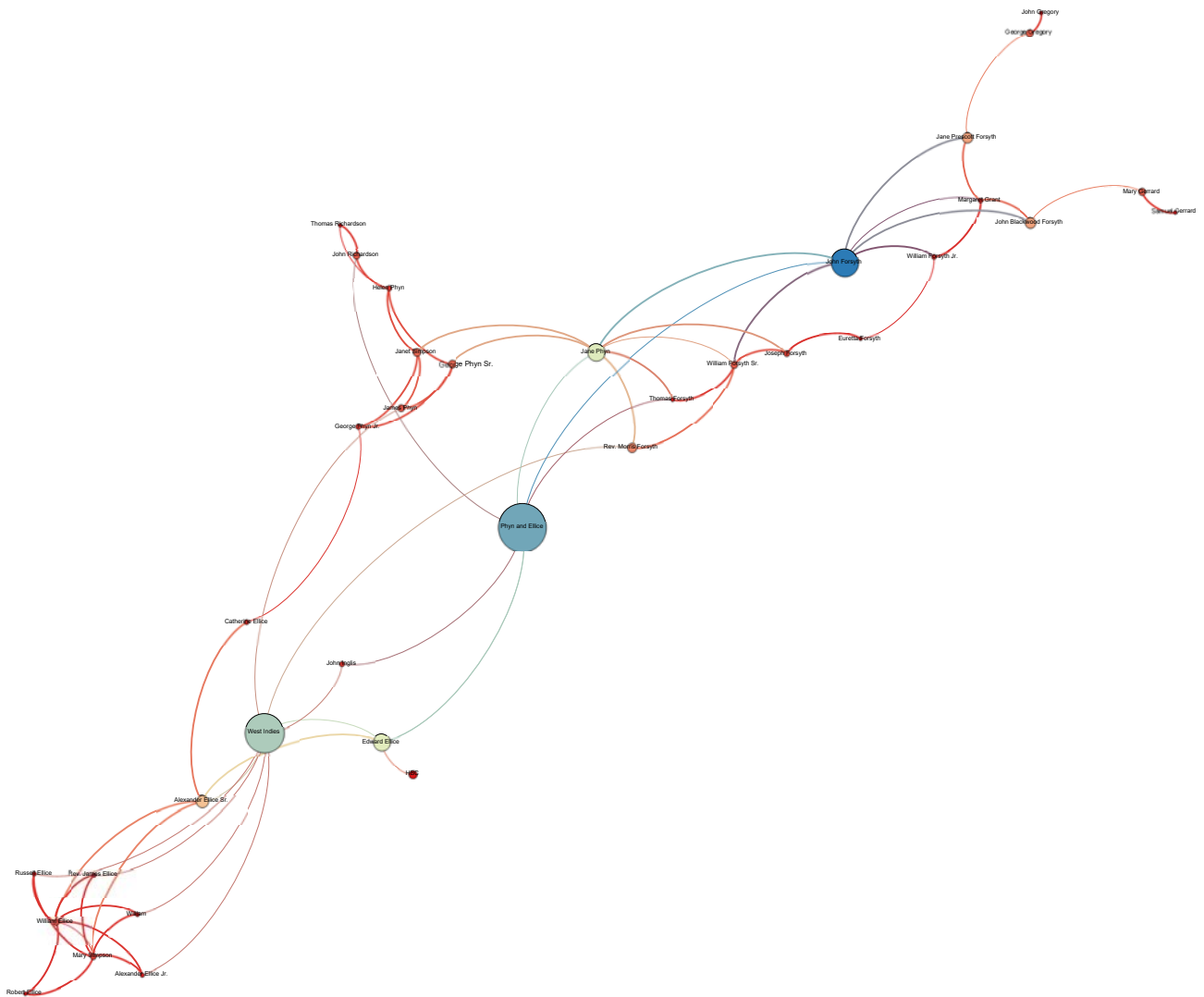


Figure 3: A survey of Phyn and Ellice and some of their family/business relationships

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gerrard_samuel_8E.html; Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, “GREGORY, JOHN (d. 1817),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 31, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gregory_john_1817_5E.html.

While the family's slave trading transactions in North America have already been touched on in an earlier chapter, the members of these connected companies and families were also significantly involved in West Indian plantations. John Inglis and his sons John Bellingham Inglis and James Inglis all identified as "of Mark Lane," the Company's establishment in London. Alexander Ellice (whom James Colthart states acquired West Indian plantations as payment for outstanding debts), Alexander Ellice's sons, Edward Ellice, Robert Ellice, Russell Ellice, William Ellice, Alexander Ellice, and possibly Reverend James Ellice all were involved in West Indian plantations either directly or through their family's connections, as part of the family's inheritances would have been linked to plantation slavery. Similarly, the Reverend Morris Forsyth, son of William Forsyth and Jean Phyn, and therefore brother to Thomas, James, and John Forsyth was involved directly in slavery in the West Indies, but present research has not produced evidence his brothers themselves were.¹⁶ The webs of relationship that tied together family and business stretched out, connecting these businesses and the extended families involved in them to transatlantic slavery in North America and in the West Indies. As with Aeneas Cameron and Grace Grant, these relationships are also a reminder of the importance of recognizing the way that many of the core relationships in the complex business dealings of this group of people reflected the creation and maintenance of family ties that ran on networks that included female family members, relationships that could be mediated and promoted by women as well as men.

George Sutherland, Richard Neaves, and Matthew Raikes: HBC employees and investors with Jamaican connections

Family connections between North American fur traders and West Indian slavery were not limited to eastern traders. And some connections could be from a distance. George Sutherland,

¹⁶ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "John Inglis of Mark Lane," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/1343723246>; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Alexander Ellice of Mark Lane," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146638519>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; James M. Colthart, "ELLICE, ALEXANDER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 30, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice_alexander_5E.html; Gordon F. Millar, "Ellice, Edward (1783-1863)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi-org.uml.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref%2Fodnb/8650> 08 October 2009.

who joined the ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company as a personal servant to fur trader Thomas Hutchins at Fort Albany in 1774 rose through the Company ranks to serve as the head of York Factory in 1794-1795. His career, however, was punctuated by conflict with another HBC officer, William Tomison. When Sutherland discovered that he had inherited "some considerable Property," as the HBC's London Committee informed him, from his brother Alexander in Jamaica, Sutherland was able to retire. In his will, George Sutherland appointed Alexander Lean, who served as Secretary of the HBC from 1792 to 1817, as his executor.¹⁷

As George Sutherland's story suggests, connections between HBC officers and investors and slavery did not necessarily end as slavery became increasingly unpopular in many British circles in the later eighteenth century. For example, in 1804, the year Edward Ellice made his move to take over the HBC, HBC Committee members included Thomas Neave (later Sir Thomas), who had just that year replaced his father Sir Richard Neave on the Committee. Both Neaves had interests in West Indian sugar plantations.¹⁸ Thomas Neave was replaced, in 1810, by Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, who was well known for his connections with slavery.¹⁹ The following year, banker Job Matthew Raikes joined the committee. In 1807, when Neaves, Raikes, and a third committee member took responsibility for the Company's mounting debt, two of these

¹⁷Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "George Sutherland," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146651189>. Accessed on 14 December 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Alexander Lean," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146651191>; Jennifer S. H. Brown, "SUTHERLAND, GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 31, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sutherland_george_4E.html; "Deaths in January 1799, in Kingston, Mr. Alexander Sutherland," *The New Jamaica magazine*, vol. 3, 74.

¹⁸ HBCA Annals: Subject index, A-C RG20/6a/24 Subject Index, A-C; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Sir Richard Neave 1st Bart.," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146638551>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Sir Thomas Neave 2nd Bart.," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/25073>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

¹⁹ HBCA Biographical Sheet: "Colvile, Andrew," available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/c/colvile_andrew.pdf. Accessed 12 December 2020.

three members had demonstrable connections to slavery.²⁰ Raikes, who would remain on the committee until 1810, when he was replaced by Wedderburn Colvile's cousin John Halkett (who also had connections to slavery), was the son-in-law of West Indian plantation owner Nathaniel Bayly, through whom Raikes' wife had two half siblings in the West Indies, Eliza Street, and Bayly's estate manager, Nathaniel Bayly Williams. In addition to acting as executor to his father-in-law and holding a mortgage over his father-in-law's estates in St. Mary Jamaica, it is almost certain that Raikes had a Black servant named Robert Fisher, who was baptized on the 30th of November 1808, at the age of 19. Raikes' son-in-law was also involved in West Indian slavery.²¹

These intersections between slavery, finance, and the HBC should not be written off as purely coincidental. As Nicholas Draper writes in ““Helping make Britain great: the commercial legacies of slave-ownership in Britain,” “slave-owners and their direct descendants were prominent in the Bank [of England]’s directorate throughout the [nineteenth] century.” Citing West Indian merchant representation on the Bank’s 1801 board, Draper notes that five of the board’s twenty-six members had significant West Indian business connections, including Sir Richard Neave.²² It is difficult to quantitatively compare this proportion to that of the HBC, in

²⁰ Ann Carlos, "The Causes and Origins of the North American Fur Trade Rivalry: 1804-1810." *The Journal of Economic History* 41, no. 4 (1981): 777-794. Accessed October 27, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2120645>, 787; HBCA RG20/6a/24 Subject Index, A-C.

²¹N. Draper, "The City of London and Slavery: Evidence from the First Dock Companies, 1795-1800." *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 61, no. 2 (2008): 432-66. Accessed October 27, 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Job Matthew Raikes," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/-1055845506>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; Hertfordshire County Council, DP_29_1_9 Robert Fisher Baptism Entry: FISHER Robert Fisher, a black man, servant to Mathew Raikes Esq of Theobald's Park, aged 19; Cheshunt Baptism Register, 30 Nov 1808; The Royal Kalendar (Calendar) Or, Complete and Correct Annual Register, for England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, for the Year 1807 (etc.) Stockdale, 1807, 301; NatWest Group Archives, GB 1502 CU/127, "Papers of Job Matthew Raikes as executor of the estate of Nathaniel Bayly," available at <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/f92ea20b-a12d-3b1f-bdf4-e1eeb5ebfe51>. Accessed 12 December 2020; RBS Archives, 'Papers of Nathaniel Bayly, West Indian Plantation Owner', <http://heritagearchives.rbs.com/content/dam/rbs/Documents/History/Hub/cu-127.pdf> [accessed 30/01/2017]; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Edward Rose Tunno," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/45902>. Accessed 12 December 2020.

²² Nicholas Draper, "Helping make Britain great: the commercial legacies of slave-ownership in Britain," in Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith MacClelland, Katie Donington, and Rachel

1801 the HBC Governor and Committee consisted of only 8 persons in total, making statistical arguments risky. Anecdotally, of these eight, the Governor, Sir James Winter Lake, was a descendant of both Sir Bibye Lake and Sir Atwell Lake, whose earlier family connections with slavery have already been discussed. Sir Richard Neave's interests in both slavery and banking connect him to the HBC and the Bank in a way that suggests that the HBC was no stranger to alliances between West Indian plantations, capital, and finance that could travel along the webs of networks that connected gentlemanly capital to imperial enterprises, so often knit together by family relationships.²³ Over the next decade or so, family members connected with Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk and his wife Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk would continue this trend, as Lady Selkirk's brother, Andrew Wedderburn Colville, and her cousin John Wedderburn Halket, as well as her brother-in-law through his marriage to her husband's sister, Sir James Montgomery (who also had connections with West Indian Slavery) became involved in the concern as Committee members and significant investors.²⁴

The Wedderburn Family

While the movement of the members and capital of the business operations of the Phyn and Ellice companies in the later eighteenth century may have been typical of what Nicholas Draper frames as "circuits of empire," as Draper notes, in the period around the abolition of slavery in the British Empire there also appears to have been a discernable movement of people away from tightly focused business interests located in slave economies and slave colonies which "parallels

Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 78-126, 97-98.

²³ John Debrett, *Debrett's Baronetage of England: With Alphabetical Lists of Such Baronetcies as Have Merged in the Peerage, Or Have Become Extinct, and Also of the Existing Baronets of Nova Scotia and Ireland*, (J.G. & F. Rivington, 1835), 158.

²⁴ John Debrett, *Debrett's Baronetage of England...* 5th ed., vol. 2 (London, 1824), 988-989; *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*, "Sir James Montgomery, 2nd Bart.," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/10539>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*, "William Tod," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146645785>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*, "Andrew Colville," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/24188>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; HBCA RG20/6a/24, Annals: Subject index, A-C.

the appearance in London of former slave-owning merchants in the new joint-stock companies promoting imperial projects.” In this, the authors specifically cite the example of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, his son Eden Colvile, and their diversification into the Hudson’s Bay Company.²⁵ The story of how the Wedderburn family became involved in the HBC highlights how the impacts of changes in slavery within the empire could travel along webs of relationship, intersecting with different parts of empire in different ways.

Like Edward Ellice, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile (later just Colvile) came from a large and deeply interconnected family that had significant interests in West Indian slavery. And, like Ellice and the NWC partners he represented, Wedderburn Colvile began to develop a business interest in the HBC in the first decade of the nineteenth century, at a point where the family company he was involved in, then named Wedderburn, Webster & Co., was experiencing financial strain. As Wedderburn family historian and genealogist Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn noted, “between 1801 and 1820, the prosperity of the firm, I believe, both reached its zenith and began to decline.” Matters did not improve, the author contends, when, in 1824, an uninsured vessel was lost, which “added to the difficulties of the firm, already crippled by a decrease in prices and business, and threatened with the abolition of the slaves.”²⁶

Andrew Wedderburn Colvile was born at his family’s home, Inveresk, on the 6th of November 1779, the son of James Wedderburn (later Wedderburn Colvile) of Inveresk, the second surviving son of Sir John Wedderburn, fifth Baronet of Blackness. Sir John Wedderburn had been executed in the violent days following Culloden, and James and his older brother John quickly made their way to Jamaica, where they both established themselves as medical professionals, as “practitioner[s] in physick and chirurgery,” although both brothers were quite

²⁵ Nicholas Draper, “Possessing People,” in Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith MacClelland, Katie Donington, and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 34-77, 61.

²⁶ Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book: A History of the Wedderburns in the Counties of Berwick, and Forfar, Designed of Wedderburn, Kingennie, Ester Powrie, Blackness, Balindean, and Gosford; and Their Younger Branches; Together with Some Account of Other Families of the Name, Wedderburn* vol. 1, (1898), 443-444.

young, James would have been only about eighteen when he arrived in Jamaica in 1747, and neither seem to have had any demonstrable professional qualifications. In the quarter century between James' arrival in Jamaica and his departure in 1773, he, like his brother John Wedderburn of Ballindean, and two other brothers, Alexander and Peter, amassed wealth through the purchase of land and slaves in the West Indies. Following his return to Scotland, in 1774, James purchased Invernesk Lodge in Invernesk, Midlothia, and married Isabella Blackburn (or Colvile), from whom the Colvile name originated. As Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn explained it, "In right of her mother, Isabella Blackburn (or Colvile) was heiress of Craigflower, co. Fife, and upon this property devolving on his wife, James Wedderburn assumed (by usage only) the additional surname and coat of arms of Colvile of Ochiltree."²⁷ Andrew Colvile would take this change one step further when, in 1814, he legally changed his name to Colvile through Royal license.²⁸

In his family history and genealogy, Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn points out that James was not the only brother to change his name, writing that the branches of family descended from all three surviving sons, "curiously enough, have assumed other or additional names. These are the Wedderburn-Colviles of Ochiltree, the Wedderburn-Ogilvies of Ruthven and Wedderburn-Maxwells of Middlebie, descended from Andrew, Peter, and James, the three surviving sons of James Wedderburn."²⁹ Andrew Wedderburn-Maxwell's 1879 succession to the

²⁷ John Wedderburn of Balindean, James' brother, was the John Wedderburn involved in the famous Joseph Knight case. Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 92-93; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 305-307, 441; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "John Wedderburn of Balindean," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146634306>. Accessed 12 December 2020, Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "James Wedderburn Colvile," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643501>. Accessed 12 December 2020.

²⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 307-308; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Andrew Colvile," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/24188>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; HBCA Biographical Sheet: "Colvile Andrew," available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/c/colvile_andrew.pdf. Accessed 12 December 2020.

²⁹ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, lxxi

title and name Maxwell began as a 1722 deed of entail put in motion by John Maxwell.³⁰ However, the other two of these name changes reflected an inheritance that travelled through female relations, the name changes of Andrew Colville's father James Wedderburn Colville (and from him to Andrew Colville) already discussed, and Peter Wedderburn (later Ogilvy). Peter Wedderburn Ogilvy, who in part of his career captained vessels to the West Indies, married Anna Ogilvy who was heir to James Ogilvy of Islabank or Ruthven. On his father-in-law's death, he added the name Ogilvy and the family's coat of arms to his family's as part of the inheritance.³¹

Andrew Wedderburn Colville was admitted as a salaried partner to Wedderburn Webster & Co. in 1798, becoming a member of the house in 1803.³² The origins of the company that Wedderburn Colville joined in 1798 are somewhat obscure, but Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn believes the company began, probably before 1775, as "Messrs. Webster, druggists" in Leadenhall Street, London. Kent's directory of London lists a James Webster, druggist in 1753. A survey of directories over the last half of the 1700s shows a James Webster, druggist, Leadenhall-street, who continues to appear in Kent's Directories of London, for instance in 1765; James & David Webster, druggists of 35 Leadenhall-street, are in the Kent's Directories for 1767-72, they are called "drug merchants" in 1778-1779 and in 1785. In 1794, Webster & Wedderburns, merchants are listed at the same address in 1794.³³ The original firm was probably started by James and John Webster, sons of Beatrix Proctor and a Mr. Webster. Over time,

³⁰ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 316.

³¹ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 311; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Peter Wedderburn Ogilvy," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643563>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

³² Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 308; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Wedderburn Webster," (firm), available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/firm/view/-1651782556>. Accessed on 12 December 2020, Great Britain, Parliament, *House of Commons. Select Committee on Foreign Trade. Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Consider of the Means of Improving and Maintaining the Foreign Trade of the Country, 1823*, (West India Docks, M. Stationery Office, 1823), 199.

³³ Listed in Kent's Directory for the Year 1753. 20th edn., 1753, KENT, Henry. London, and in subsequent directories for 1765, 1767-1772, 1778-1779, 1785, 1794. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 21 December 2020.

Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn states, the Websters and Jamaican Plantation owning Wedderburns went from doing business with each other to doing business together. But the Webster and Wedderburn families were, in fact, also connected.

Robert Wedderburn of Pearsie's wife Isobel or Isabella Edward was heiress of Pearsie.³⁴ Isobel Edward's mother was named Beatrix Proctor, and it was through her second marriage to a "Mr. Webster" that the Wedderburn and Webster families' connections run.³⁵ Through her marriage to this Dundee merchant, "Mr. Webster," Beatrix Proctor had several sons, including James and John, as well as the Rev. Dr. Thomas Webster, making the Webster sons half siblings to Isobel Edward. When Thomas Webster died in 1816, he left a will that stipulated that his considerable estate be used to buy land in Forfar and Perth. This bequest was entailed to the children of Elizabeth Wedderburn, daughter of Robert Wedderburn of Pearsie or, failing that, to the children of her sister Katherine Wedderburn, at the same time requiring that the heirs would have to take on the name of Webster. Elizabeth Wedderburn, daughter of Robert Wedderburn of Pearsie, and sister of Charles Wedderburn of Pearsie, had married James Graham of Meathie and Balmuir, and they had a number of children, including James Graham of Meathie and Balmuir (born 1774) who inherited from Thomas Webster, taking the last name of Webster in 1816, as a requirement of that inheritance. James Graham Webster married Elizabeth Ramsay in 1823 and was the James Graham who partnered with Geddes Simpson to form the company of Graham and Simpson. Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn sums up this complex web of family relationships by saying that "Dr. Thomas Webster was thus great uncle of the half blood on the mother's side to James Graham who succeeded him."³⁶ Two of Elizabeth's other sons succeeded

³⁴ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 321-322, 324; Legacies of British Slave Ownership, "David Webster I," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146650333>. Accessed on 14 December 2020.

³⁵ A brief survey of records available through Ancestry.com suggests this might have been a "George Webster." *Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 14 December 2020; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 321-322, 324.

³⁶ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 320; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "James Webster formerly Graham," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146662383>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

to Pearsie, John Graham (born 1787) and David (born 1858). Both of these sons assumed the name of Wedderburn on their succession.³⁷

It was Thomas Webster's brothers James and John who established Webster and Co., in Leadenhall Street, druggists. The Company eventually passed to Robert Wedderburn of Pearsey's son David Wedderburn and to John Wedderburn of Spring Garden. This David Wedderburn took the name Webster as a stipulation in James Webster's will. Through the original Webster brothers, two of Robert Wedderburn of Pearsie's sons were able to receive commissions in the Honourable East India Company, suggesting the mutual connections and support these and other webs of family relationship provided, but also the reach these webs could have.³⁸ In his history of the Wedderburn family, Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn wrote "There can be little doubt that the Wedderburns in Jamaica and the Websters in Leadenhall Street were able to do business with mutual advantage, and that gradually their interests became more and more closely identified." The beginnings of this closer identification, he speculates, may have begun in the 1780s. In 1796, partners John Wedderburn and David Wedderburn Webster added John Wedderburn's oldest son, David Wedderburn as a partner to the concern then operating as Wedderburn, Webster & Co. David Webster died in 1801.³⁹

Andrew Wedderburn Colville graduated from the University of Glasgow in 1790.⁴⁰ As already noted, he joined Wedderburn, Webster & Co. as a salaried partner in 1798, becoming a member of the trading house in 1803. Over the years, the partnership would be joined by Alexander Seton in 1810; James, the son of "old John Wedderburn" was a partner from 1810 to 1813. In 1815, when Sir David Wedderburn retired, the four remaining partners continued the business, and the

³⁷ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, lxxii, 321-324.

³⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 322, 441; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "David Webster II born Wedderburn," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146650335>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

³⁹ Wedderburn, *Wedderburn Book*, 441-442,

⁴⁰ "The University of Glasgow Story, People, Andrew Wedderburn," available at <https://universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH25679&type=P>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

name of the Company changed to Wedderburn, Colvile, & Co. In 1820 the Company again reformed, this time under the name of Colvile, Wedderburn & Co. when John Wedderburn died and John Wedderburn of Auchterhouse joined the firm. In 1830, James Wedderburn retired and the Company reformed as Colvile & Co. under Alexander Seton and Andrew Wedderburn Colvile. When Seton retired in 1836, Andrew Colvile continued in business, eventually bringing his son Eden Colvile into the firm.⁴¹

The various incarnations of the Wedderburn, Webster, Colvile firm operated in a complex web of interests itself, members of the firm singly and collectively owning and operating plantations and ships that moved between the West Indies and London.⁴² It also embraced a range of activities relating to the West Indian trade. In his book *Sir George Simpson, overseas governor of the Hudson's Bay Company: A pen picture of a man of action*, Arthur Morton indicated that Geddes Mackenzie Simpson joined “the firm of Wedderburn & Co.... making it Graham, Simpson & Wedderburn, West India Merchants. Andrew Wedderburn was the principal partner.” John S. Galbraith suggests that the firm of Graham and Simpson, who were sugar brokers, merged with Wedderburn and Company in 1812, a merger that would connect Wedderburn Colvile with Geddes Simpson’s nephew George (later Sir George) Simpson, a relationship that will be discussed later. We have already seen the relationships between Graham and the Wedderburns.⁴³ Gary Spraakman states that the name Wedderburn “was added to the Graham

⁴¹ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 441-443.

⁴² Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 443-444; see Legacies of British Slave Ownership database for a more complete list of properties and proprietors by using the relationship connections in the database. Available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643501>. Accessed 12 December 2020. Alexander Anderson Seton of Mounie, son of James Anderson and Margaret Seton, was the uncle of HBC fur trader Alexander Caulfield Seton. Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “Alexander Seton,” available at <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/40851>. Accessed 12 December 2020. Seton, who had been born Anderson, assumed the name Seton on inheriting the title to Mounie through his mother. William Anderson. *The Scottish Nation: Or, The Surnames, Families, Literature, Honours, and Biographical History of the People of Scotland*, vol 3 (A. Fullarton & Company, 1877), 440-441.

⁴³ Arthur S. Morton, *Sir George Simpson, Overseas Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, a Pen Picture of a Man of Action* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1944), 10; John S. Galbraith, “SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 3, 2020,

and Simpson partnership in 1808.”⁴⁴ Andrew Colvile was also involved in the West India Docks in London, which had begun operating in 1802. In his 1823 testimony to a Select Committee of Parliament, Colvile stated that he had been a director of the Docks Company since 1809.⁴⁵ As well, Wedderburn Colvile was a member of the West India committee, and, as emancipation in the British Empire loomed closer, he pioneered the use of indenture to introduce a new class of unfree labour to the British Caribbean. In the spring of 1838, Wedderburn Colvile brought 82 indentured servants to his Bellevue plantation in British Guiana from Calcutta. Within a year twelve of the men, and a girl who had been raped, had died.⁴⁶ As Hall et al. note, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile’s brother-in-law, George Eden, served as India’s governor-general from 1835 to 1841, a connection that could stand further investigation ⁴⁷

In 1802, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile married Elizabeth Susannah Wedderburn. She was the daughter of John Wedderburn of Spring Garden, a partner in Wedderburn & Co. Her father was a cousin of James Wedderburn Colvile. As part of her marriage settlement, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile acquired Fontabelle plantation. Elizabeth Susannah Wedderburn Colvile died soon after their marriage.⁴⁸ On 26th June, 1806, Wedderburn Colvile married the Hon. Louisa Mary Eden, daughter of William Eden, the first Lord Auckland, who Jack Bumsted has described as a “Whig

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html; see also <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146631028>

⁴⁴ Gary Spraakman, *Management Accounting at the Hudson's Bay Company: From Quill Pen to Digitization* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2015), 77.

⁴⁵ Great Britain, *Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Consider ... the Foreign Trade of the Country, 1823*, 199; Draper, “Helping make Britain great,” 106.

⁴⁶ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “Andrew Colvile,” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/24188>

⁴⁷ Draper, “Possessing People,” 62.

⁴⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 346-347. Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “John Wedderburn of Spring Garden and St Marylebone,” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643443>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “Elizabeth Susannah Wedderburn Colvile (née Wedderburn)” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643619>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

potentate.”⁴⁹ Louisa was a particular friend of Jean Wedderburn, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile’s sister, and the future Lady Selkirk; their relationship will come up again later .⁵⁰

In a letter from Wedderburn Colvile to Lord Auckland written 4 August 1806 , Wedderburn Colvile opens by apologizing for not writing, then assures his father-in-law that Louisa is well loved in his family

I wonder at you & Lady Auckland having any anxiety about Louisa’s place in the affections of her new relations, I had never a doubt on the subject for she is really all I could possibly desire & almost more than I expect _ and I can assure you my expectations were not moderate.

There was more reason for your apprehension of her being spoiled among them though I do not think there is much danger_ not that she does not meet with indulgence kindness & admiration enough to spoil most people, but she has no idea of self being of the least consideration and that is a disposition which it is impossible to spoil.⁵¹

After outlining some sightseeing travel plans he was making for Louisa and himself, Wedderburn Colvile closes with what appears to be arrangements relating to Louisa’s marriage settlement. In another letter to Auckland, written in October of 1806, Wedderburn appealed to his father-in-law for help in getting his brother a commission. Mentioning a number of names, including Lord Minto, Wedderburn Colvile suggested that his brother might be hired because “he

⁴⁹ HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Colvile, Andrew,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/c/colvile_andrew.pdf. Accessed 12 December 2020; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 308; Thomas Douglas Lord Selkirk and J. M. Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1799-1809* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1984), 65.

⁵⁰ Sian Bumsted, "Lady Selkirk and the Fur Trade," *Manitoba History* 38 (Autumn/Winter 1999-2000), 35-39, 35.

⁵¹ British Library, Add MSS. 34456 f 589, Andrew Wedderburn to Lord Auckland, Inveresk, 4 August, 1806. My thanks to Tolly Bradford for sharing this document.

could be useful [to various relations of the people he was appealing to in England who were then in India] without any trouble to himself.”⁵²

James Wedderburn died at Inveresk Lodge on the 14th of December, 1807, less than two weeks after the marriage of his daughter Jean to Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk. Following his death, Andrew Wedderburn Colville sold Inveresk to the sisters of Sir David Wedderburn in April 1808.⁵³ In October of 1810, Lord Auckland, Louisa’s father, wrote to Lord Greville that “Eden Farm [where Lord Auckland and his family were planning to spend their winter] has acquired a new interest in our estimation, through the kindness of Lord Gwydir, who has let his house and place called Langley Farm to Mr. Wedderburn. You may probably recollect that the grounds and walks are joined to ours by a bridge. Louisa is delighted at being brought so close to us; and it will be a great and permanent comfort to Lady Auckland.”⁵⁴ In an April 1811 letter from Auckland to Greville, Auckland wrote that “My son-in-law, Mr. Wedderburn....lives in daily and unreserved intercourse with me,” something evidenced by other correspondence from Auckland.⁵⁵

Early in 1810, Wedderburn became a Proprietor of the Hudson’s Bay Company and was soon elected a Member of the Committee. On the 7th of March, 1810, he submitted what would come to be known as the Company’s retrenchment plan. Historian Tolly Bradford argues that the experiences of Wedderburn Colville in accounting and business management that he had gained through his extensive West Indian enterprises, in essence businesses related to slavery, informed

⁵² British Library, THE AUCKLAND PAPERS: correspondence and papers, political and private, of William Eden, 1st Baron Auckland. ... Vol. xlvi. (ff. 612). Sept. 1806-1809. William Eden, 1st Baron Auckland: Miscellaneous private correspondence: 1806-1814, includes: f 1, 199-209, 492, 533 Henry Richard Vassall Fox, 3rd Baron Holland: Letters to Lord Auckland: 1806-1809, f 3, 245, Add MS 34457: Sep 1806-1809, Andrew Wedderburn to Lord Auckland, 4 Oct. 1806, f 61.

⁵³ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, 305; “Jean Wedderburn Colville,” marriage 21 November 1807, *Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561-1910* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 10 December 2020; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, 305, 308.

⁵⁴ Bickley et al. *Report on the manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue*, 53.

⁵⁵ Bickley et al. *Report on the manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue*, 4, 6, 53, 129, 224, 339.

his innovations.⁵⁶ Wedderburn Colvile would be named Deputy Governor of the HBC in 1839, and Governor in 1852, in which position he remained until his death in 1856.⁵⁷ Wedderburn Colvile's influence and effect on the HBC, as will be seen later, was significant. But it did not occur in a vacuum.

If the creation and maintenance of relationships were key to the success of families like the Wedderburns and to the businesses they were enmeshed in, they could be strategically withheld just as much as advanced. That this was the case is amply illustrated in the life story of Robert Wedderburn, son of James Wedderburn Colvile and half brother to Jean Wedderburn and Andrew Wedderburn Colvile. Robert Wedderburn was born to an enslaved African woman, Rosanna, the daughter of Talkee Amy, in Jamaica. By his own account, his father James Wedderburn sold his mother, Rosanna, while she was pregnant with him, on the condition that he be freed at his birth, a story that is not entirely born out by surviving records, as will be discussed later. James Wedderburn Colvile provided little support for Robert, who grew up within the often fragile and frequently brutalized web of a family enmeshed in the networks of slavery. In his later writings Robert Wedderburn recounted the vicious beatings his family members received, while the threat of family separation always hung over enslaved labourers.⁵⁸

By his own account, even before his birth, Robert Wedderburn's father James Wedderburn essentially abandoned him, and when his mother was sold on he was separated from her and sent

⁵⁶ Tolly Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System' of the Hudson's Bay Company" *Prairie History* (Summer 2020), 14ff.

⁵⁷ Bradford, Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System'," 13, 22. Bradford notes that while some sources list Wedderburn Colvile as purchasing shares in 1809, the first evidence of his purchasing shares is in January 1810. HBCA Biographical Sheet: "Colvile, Andrew," available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/c/colvile_andrew.pdf. Accessed 12 December 2020.

⁵⁸ Daniel Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733-1833* (Chapel Hill: Iniversity of North Carolina Press, 2018), 366; Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 287; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Robert Wedderburn," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643591>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

to live with his grandmother Talkee Amy. In 1778, Robert Wedderburn made his way to Britain. Over time, he made his living as best he could through tailoring, minor theft, and whatever means he could. When he approached his father for help, he was rebuffed. This process of severing him from family connection would be repeated by his half brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile. Both Daniel Livesay, and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker argue that Robert Wedderburn's experiences of terror, of witnessing his mother and grandmother brutally beaten, and of the overarching brutality of slave life in Jamaica in general pushed Robert Wedderburn toward Radicalism and Unitarianism. However, read alongside the lives of other of James Wedderburn's children it is possible that part of the attraction he felt to these causes may have been that Unitarianism and Radicalism would have offered him, severed from the webs of his birth family's relationships, the opportunity to become part of another web.⁵⁹

In the early 1820s, Robert Wedderburn launched a volley of published pamphlets and newspaper pieces aimed at ending slavery but also prominently featuring his relationships with the Wedderburn family. Part of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile's response to his claims, printed in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* deserve a close read. In 1824, in reply to one of Robert Wedderburn's letters the paper had published earlier, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile wrote

To the Editor of Bell's Life in London. Sir _ Your Paper of the 29th ult., containing a letter, signed Robert Wedderburn, was put into my hands only yesterday, otherwise I should have felt it to be my duty to take earlier notice of it.

In answer to this most slanderous publication I have to state, that the person calling himself Robert Wedderburn is NOT a son of the late Mr. James Wedderburn, of Invernesk, who never had any child by, or and connection of *that kind* with, the mother of this man. The pretence of his using the name of Wedderburn, at all, arises out of the following circumstances: -- The late Mr.

⁵⁹ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 287; Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune*, 366; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Robert Wedderburn," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643591>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

James Wedderburn, of Inveresk, had when he resided in the parish of Westmoreland, in the Island of Jamaica, a negro woman *slave*, whom he employed as a cook; this woman had so violent a temper that she was continually quarreling with the other servants, and occasioning a disturbance in the house. He happened to make some observations upon her troublesome temper, when a Gentleman in company said, he would be very glad to purchase her if she was a good cook. The *sale accordingly took place*, and the woman was removed to the residence of the Gentleman, in the parish of Hanover. Several years afterwards, this woman was delivered of a mulatto child, and as *she could not tell who was the father*, her master, in a foolish joke, named the child Wedderburn. About twenty-two or twenty-three years ago, this man applied to me for money upon the *strength of his name*, claiming to be a son of *Mr. James Wedderburn*, of Inveresk, which occasioned me to write to my father, when he gave me the above explanation respecting this person; adding that a few years after he had returned to this country and married, this same person importuned him with the same story that he now tells, and as he persisted in annoying him, after the above explanation was given to him, that he found it necessary to have him brought before the Sheriff of the county of Edinburgh. ⁶⁰

Manumission records for Jamaica cast a great deal of doubt on the story Andrew Wedderburn Colville told the newspapers of the time. Surviving records show that, in April of 1767, James Wedderburn of the Parish of Westmoreland in the Island of Jamaica aforesaid Practitioner in Physick and Surgery manumitted James and Robert Wedderburn, both children of a slave he had previously owned, a “Mulatto Woman named Rosanna.” In this manumission record, James Wedderburn stated that while he had owned Rosanna, she was now owned by James Charles Sholto Douglas. Here James Wedderburn Practitioner in Physick and Surgery agreed to the manumission

⁶⁰ “Brother or No Brother – “That is the Question?” *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, Sunday, March 21, 1824, 93.

for and in Consideration of the Sum of two hundred pounds current money of the Island aforesaid [Jamaica] to me in hand paid as or before the ensealing or delivery of these presents by Peter Wedderburn of the Parish and Island aforesaid Carpenter the Receipt whereof I hereby acknowledge and of and from every part and parcel thereof do hereby exoner and forever discharge the said Peter Wedderburn his heirs and Executors have Manumised Enfranchised and sett free and by these presents do fully and absolutely manumize Enfranchise and set free a Mulla Child maned James And by these presents do fully and absolutely Manumize Enfranchise and sett free a Mulatto Child named Robert ...⁶¹

A baptismal certificate from Westmoreland Parish clearly shows James Wedderburn as the father of James, and his mother as Rosanna.⁶² Although a similar document has not yet been located for Robert, given this manumission record it seems unlikely that James Wedderburn Colvile would have retained the rights to sell Robert Wedderburn if he had been born a considerable time after his mother Rosanna had been sold to Douglas. This record also suggests that the third son of James Wedderburn Colvile and Rosanna, who Robert Wedderburn does not name, may have been the carpenter, Peter Wedderburn.

In his response to Robert Wedderburn, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile drew out a range of weapons to not just distance himself and his family from Robert Wedderburn, but to make it clear there could be no family connection to Robert Wedderburn whatsoever. Suggesting that Robert Wedderburn's mother, a Black enslaved woman who had a bad temper and whose moral compass was lacking could not be a credible witness and making a particular effort to emphasize

⁶¹ British Library, Endangered Archives Program, EAP148/3/1/5, Manumission Liber: Volume 9 [1766-1770], 11 April 1767, available at <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP148-3-1-5#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=88&xywh=-112%2C654%2C2595%2C1929>. Accessed 12 December 2020.

⁶² Jamaica, Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880, Westmoreland, baptisms, marriages, burials, 1739-1825, volume 1, Christening, James Wedderburn, 20 July 1760. Available through Family Search: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1827268>. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

her slave state were perhaps predictable approaches for Wedderburn Colvile to take. Adding the detail that Robert Wedderburn had come by his name not through his paternity, but as a joke, rather cruelly presses the importance Wedderburn Colvile placed on making sure that Robert Wedderburn could not be considered by anyone a member of his family networks.

It might be argued that Robert Wedderburn's social status, having served in the navy, and survived in England on tailoring work and petty theft, informed Wedderburn Colvile's need to distance his family networks from Robert Wedderburn, but here race and class were clearly mutually constitutive. Robert Wedderburn, the child of an enslaved Black woman, had never had the opportunities or connections James Wedderburn's White family enjoyed, including their access to the support of the very networks Wedderburn Colvile, like his father before him, had worked so diligently to separate him from. Nor can his being born out of wedlock be a complete explanation for the family's need to be separate from him.

George Simpson, who will be discussed later, was born out of wedlock, but while his trajectory was influenced and informed by that fact, he was supported by his extended paternal relations, and given opportunities Robert Wedderburn could never have hoped to enjoy. Nicholas Garry offers another example of the differences between the experiences of White children and children like Robert Wedderburn, whose mothers were not White. Nicholas Garry, for instance, although born out of wedlock, was raised by Thomas and Sarah Langley, probably an aunt and uncle. Thomas Langley, who was appointed Governor of the HBC in 1807, brought Nicholas Garry, who would eventually join Langley on the HBC's London Committee, into the Company. While it cannot be argued that Garry and George Simpson had all of the advantages and opportunities that they might have had had their parents been married when they were born, they were included to some degree in the webs of support their families had to offer. In the extended Wedderburn family and business networks, race, in this case of the mother, could influence what networks children could be connected with. While the connections to the networks of family and opportunities people like George Simpson and Nicholas Garry could draw on were somewhat

obscured, their connections to the webs of relationship between family and business were not dismissed as a poor joke.⁶³

If people could be severed from the Wedderburn web, they could also be drawn closer in. The life of another member of the Wedderburn web of relationships, John Halkett, is an example of this. Halkett, the son of John Wedderburn of Pittfirane (John Wedderburn, fourth baronet of Gosford, who later took on the name Halkett as part of an inheritance), and Mary Hamilton, is sometimes referred to as a cousin of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, even though their relationship appears to go back a number of generations before it comes to a common ancestor. Based on the family pedigree in *The Wedderburn Book*, Andrew Colvile and John Halket appear to be fourth cousins, once removed. As with the case of Robert Wedderburn and his family, the Wedderburn's webs of relationship were not entirely literal, not always or only reflecting rigid genealogical pedigrees; relationships could be tended, amplified, neglected, or broken. They could be reinforced, or forced away. Halkett served as secretary of presentations to Alexander Wedderburn, 1st Baron Loughborough, from 1797 to 1801. In 1801 he was appointed Governor-in-Chief to the Bahamas, then in 1803 as Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of Tobago. He also served as chief commissioner for West India accounts.⁶⁴ By his first marriage to Anna Todd, (Anna's sister married John Halkett's brother Peter) who died in 1805, he would have benefited by the £10,000 her father, plantation owner William Todd left her.⁶⁵ Halkett bought shares in the HBC in 1809, and was appointed to the HBC's London Committee in 1811. In

⁶³ John McFarland, "GARRY, NICHOLAS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 4, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/garry_nicholas_8E.html; John S. Galbraith, "SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 4, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html.

⁶⁴ My thanks to genealogist Cameron Longo for his help calculating this relationship. Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, liv, lv, 387, 392; Shirlee Anne Smith, "HALKETT, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 3, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/halkett_john_8E.html.

⁶⁵ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "William Tod," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146645785>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 392.

1815, following his first wife's death, Halkett married the sister of Thomas Douglas Lord Selkirk, Lady Katherine Douglas, making him, through marriage, brother-in-law of Lord and Lady Selkirk, Jean Wedderburn Douglas, and tightening even further the relationship with Wedderburn Colvile.⁶⁶

Sir James Montgomery of Stanhope's relationship to the Wedderburn web is perhaps the most tenuous. Montgomery's father, also James, was involved in emigration and colonization schemes in Prince Edward Island in the later eighteenth century, famously referring to his project's indentured servants as "White Negroes."⁶⁷ Despite the coincidence in colonizing interests Lord Selkirk shared with Sir James Sr., Bumsted notes that Lord Selkirk did not meet Sir James the son until 1805, when, as he writes, "they discovered they had common interests." In 1806, Montgomery married Lady Elizabeth Douglas, sister of Lord Selkirk, soon to become sister-in-law to Jean Wedderburn Colvile. "The marriage," writes Bumsted, "would ally the two families with the largest landholdings on Prince Edward Island....If they could cooperate together to 'improve' the island as they had their estates at home, the island might begin to prosper." Montgomery, who served as Member of Parliament for Peebleshire from 1800 to 1831, and from 1804 to 1806 as Lord Advocate for Scotland, had West Indian interests, and a Black servant named "Hannibal." Even after his wife's death in 1814, Montgomery remained a staunch supporter of the Selkirks in Lord Selkirk's Red River colonization efforts throughout Selkirk's life. He also stood as one of the executors of the Selkirk estate, along with John Halkett, James Wedderburn, and Andrew Colvile.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Shirlee Anne Smith, "HALKETT, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 3, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/halkett_john_8E.html.

⁶⁷ J. M. Bumsted, "Sir James Montgomery and Prince Edward Island, 1767-1803," *Acadiensis*, 7(2) (1978), 76-92. Retrieved from <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/11470>, 81

⁶⁸ J.M. Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk: A Life* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009), 142-143, 372, 429; Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Sir James Montgomery 2nd Bart.," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/10539>. Accessed on 12 December 2020; *Sharpe's present Peerage of the British Empire, 1834 with a ... list of the daughters of the nobility ... married to Commoners, etc.* (John Sharpe, 1834), n.p..

Conclusions

In 1807 Britain passed An *Act* for the Abolition of the *Slave Trade*. As with chattel slavery itself, the changes this brought, with emancipation on the horizon, would impact the fur trade. The impacts of changes to chattel slavery within the British Empire on the fur trade were not, however, simple or predictable, as a closer look at the Wedderburn family and its interactions with the HBC will show. If changes to slavery brought the Wedderburn family into the fur trade, the Wedderburn family would bring their own changes to Northern North America. The webs of family and business networks that characterized families like those discussed here were neither accidental nor neutral. They did not spring *sui generis*, they did not grow organically and spontaneously, nor did they relentlessly follow the lines of a genealogy chart. These webs were constructed, adjusted, and maintained, and as such, they could reflect the politics, the business needs, and the cultural constructions of race that informed the families who created them. They could be powerful tools for success, but they could also define and limit that success. And they were created not only by men, but by both men and women.

Chapter Five: “The plan I have laid for you:”¹ Women, Webs of Relationship and Jean Wedderburn Douglas

Introduction

As the long eighteenth century drew to a close, the transatlantic reaches of the spider’s webs of relationship brought together the consequences of imperial violence in Europe and changes to slavery laws that were impacting the West Indian sugar trade in what have come to be known as the Northern North American fur trade wars. In 1807, the networks of the Wedderburn and Douglas families were joined together when Jean Wedderburn, sister of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, married Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk.² In March of 1809 Selkirk began investing in the HBC, his brother-in-law Andrew Wedderburn Colvile began investing in the Company in 1810.³ While J.M. Bumsted has suggested that Wedderburn Colvile may have become interested in the Company through Wedderburn cousin John Halkett, who became Selkirk’s brother-in-law in 1815, Bradford writes that “It is almost certain that Wedderburn purchased shares thanks to the prodding of his brother-in-law, Thomas Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk.”⁴

Wedderburn Colvile’s interventions in the Company came at a time when, as Nicholas Draper notes, investors and business owners with interests in the West Indies, concerned about the

¹ University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary’s Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from Lady S[elkirk] to Lord S[elkirk], Montreal, 1816.

² Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “Lady Jean Selkirk (née Wedderburn)” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643561>, Accessed 12 December 2020; “Jean Wedderburn Colville,” marriage 21 November 1807, in *Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561-1910* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, 305, 308.

³ Thomas Douglas Lord Selkirk and J. M. Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1810-1820* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1987), xv; Bradford, “Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the ‘New System’,” 12.

⁴ Bradford, “Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the ‘New System’,” 22.

impacts of changes in slavery laws leading toward emancipation on their businesses, were looking to diversify those interests. At the same time, the HBC was experiencing considerable business pressure of its own, as the Napoleonic blockade made selling their furs increasingly difficult.⁵ While the complex and broad interconnections engendered in the sorts of webs of relationship the Wedderburns and Douglasses created and depended upon make it difficult to pin down a single person responsible for bringing Wedderburn Colville's attention to the investment opportunity the HBC offered, perhaps more importantly, because of the way such webs could operate, neither option is mutually exclusive. Similarly, in this environment, it is possible to understand the fur trade wars as bringing together the pressures, strains, and colonial violences of European war and the changing face of the slave trade.

In her article "The Causes and Origins of the North American Fur Trade Rivalry: 1804-1810," Ann Carlos has argued that the duopoly that operated in the Northern North American fur trade after the emergence of the NWC was passive rather than predatory in its early phase. In her examination of the HBC's London Committee meeting minutes and annual letters to their posts, essentially the "standing orders" for the Company's operations in North America, looking at the records generated by the HBC's upper levels of administration, Carlos locates the beginning of the period of predatory, and increasingly violent competition between the companies to the HBC's financial crisis in 1809-1810. Before that, she argues, what violence there was between the companies was locally generated on the ground, as it were. Carlos ties the financial crisis of 1809-1810, to a decline in demand for HBC products that had developed as a result of the Napoleonic Wars.⁶ The strain on the Company in the years around 1808 to 1810, as the Company found itself caught between having to pay relatively high prices for furs in the face of competition on the ground, and being unable to sell their furs at a good price in Europe, a situation at least in part fuelled by the economic conditions generated by the Napoleonic Wars, has long been accepted. However, what Carlos does not mention is that this crisis and its subsequent devaluing of HBC stock also brought the by then connected Douglas and

⁵ Draper, "Possessing People," in Catherine Hall, et al. *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*, 61; Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System'," 12.

⁶ Ann Carlos, "The Causes and Origins of the North American Fur Trade Rivalry: 1804-1810." *The Journal of Economic History* 41, no. 4 (1981): 777-94. Accessed November 24, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2120645>, 777, 780.

Wedderburn networks into the HBC. Together, the connected families held significant shares, and therefore significant influence, in the stressed Company. The point that Carlos identifies as the beginning of Company-sanctioned violence on the ground in the Northern North American fur trade is also the point at which the extended spider's webs of Wedderburn/Douglas family/business networks became a significant player in that Company.

If dynamic webs of relationships could link families, businesses, and continents, and create the paths along which both people and colonial violences could travel, while the creation of these spider's webs may have been gendered, it was not the exclusive purview of men. The interventions of Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk, in the events surrounding the violence of the fur trade wars, and the creation of the Selkirk Settlement, particularly her work in this regard after 1815, offer a glimpse of how elite women like Wedderburn could, and in some areas, could not, use their capacities as web builders to participate in the not-entirely-binary areas of family and business. In an essay published in *Manitoba History* in the winter of 1999-2000, Sian Bumsted argued that "Lady Selkirk was in fact a driving force behind the running of the HBC in North America during the years 1816-1819," further noting that, in the historiography, "such behavior has often been overlooked." In this essay, Sian Bumsted describes a historiography in which earlier writers including John Perry Pritchett, George Bryce, and Chester Martin had framed Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk as, to borrow a term from Sarah Carter, a "plucky" helpmeet to her visionary and benevolent husband, Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk. These earlier authors, who had access to Selkirk correspondence that has since been lost, have left only small traces, short quotes from those collections in their archives while their impressions of Lady Selkirk informed by their own positioning has been reflected in their published works.⁷

George Bryce told the readers of his book *The Life of Lord Selkirk: Colonizer of Western Canada* in 1912 that "Lady Selkirk's relations seem to have been connected with Hudson Bay

⁷ For these extracts, see: University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Chester Martin Papers, Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080; AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, "Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes.

Company affairs.”⁸ Chester Martin, in his book *Lord Selkirk's work in Canada* goes further. “Lady Selkirk, clever, energetic, and capable, quickly created a powerful social circle in opposition to the North-West bureaucracy,” he writes, noting that “the position of the Colvilles in the Hudson’s Bay Company was only less important than the capable and tactful co-operation of Lady Selkirk herself.” Referring to Lord Selkirk’s tendency to keep his own council, Martin observed that “Lady Selkirk alone probably could be reckoned an unflinching ally.” Throughout his work, Martin’s treatment of Wedderburn Douglas recognizes her strength, her business acumen, wit, and intelligence, but consistently positions her as a subordinate to her husband.⁹ Other early authors spared little ink for her role in the HBC or the Red River Settlement. In 1905, in his book *The Canadian West: Its discovery by the Sieur de La Vérendrye: Its development by the fur-trading companies down to the year 1822*, Georges Dugas limited Lady Selkirk’s involvement in his story of Canadian nation building to her endorsement of her husband’s support of a Catholic mission at Red River.¹⁰

Read alongside Kathleen Wilson’s *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century*, it is impossible not to notice the parallels between the eighteenth-century construction of the British Empire and manliness as embodied in popular colonial narrative constructions of Captain Cook and early fur trade historians’ constructions of Lord and Lady Selkirk. Created at a time when Britain was questioning some of the seamier aspects of her Empire and her colonialism, new constructions of that empire personified in the manipulation of images of Cook skillfully substituted “the benevolent goals of ‘discovery’ for the bloody annihilations of conquest,” as Wilson notes. In the context of Wilson’s essays, early writers’ constructions of Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk appear remarkably similar. “The enlightened man of exploration [or, in Selkirk’s case, exploration and colonization] would use

⁸ George Bryce, *The life of Lord Selkirk: Coloniser of western Canada* (Toronto: Musson Book Co, 1912).

⁹ Chester Bailey Martin, *Lord Selkirk's work in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1916), 115, 27, 194.

¹⁰ Georges Dugas, *The Canadian West: Its discovery by the Sieur de La Vérendrye: Its development by the fur-trading companies down to the year 1822* (Montreal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1905).

civility, tolerance and political arts rather than force to persuade indigenous peoples at once of British benevolence and British proprietary rights to the lands,” states Wilson.¹¹ In this context, early historians of the Red River Settlement like Bryce and Martin constructed Lady Selkirk, much as Wilson has written of eighteenth century public representations of women as “symbolically and literally... the bearers of national values and ideals.”¹² This was a construction mediated not only by gender, but by class. Wilson’s analysis of “Warrior Women,” the wives, partners, and female labourers who formed the vast majority of the bodies in what was known as the “baggage train” of armies, discloses the strong class lines that determined that most of these women, workers and often “female warriors” in their own right, were not drawn from the upper classes.¹³ By contrast, the wartime adventures of Lady Acland, who accompanied her husband to North America and travelled with his regiment, suggests a class-informed positioning of British elite women who might travel away from home and even close to colonial battle, a positioning that might also be applied to women like Lady Selkirk. Through the pregnant Lady Acland’s curated image, writes Wilson, she could embody Britannia, “a metaphorical and literal bearer of the nation – the aristocratic woman who temporarily gave up luxuries and entitlements... to help make her husband, and hence the nation, strong.”¹⁴

Harold Innis makes no mention of Lady Selkirk in *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, a work located in the tradition of the Laurentian thesis.¹⁵ Focused on what were by then assumed to be public-sphere business interactions, Innis’ work had little room for the colonizing efforts of the Selkirks, and no room at all for a female, even as helpmeet. It is interesting to speculate whether Innis’ intervention in considering Indigenous people and peoples as agents in the business of fur trade, but only in the context of changing relationships between wilderness and metropole, may have informed the early work of later feminist scholars

¹¹ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2006), 170-171.

¹² Wilson, *The Island Race*, 93.

¹³ Wilson, *The Island Race*, 102

¹⁴ Wilson, *The Island Race*, 122, 126.

¹⁵ Harold Adams Innis, *The fur trade in Canada: An introduction to Canadian economic history* (London : H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1930).

like Sylvia Van Kirk. Van Kirk in particular has come under criticism for failing to challenge Whiggish national histories and the Laurentian thesis. Deanna Turner notes that Van Kirk's work built "on key concepts evinced within the Laurentian thesis," including "the export of European culture, embodied by white women, to the colony." "Van Kirk's focus on the social history of the fur trade augments the Laurentian thesis significantly, but does not overturn it," she concludes.¹⁶ Another consideration may have been the importance of ideas about separate spheres during this period, combined with a feminist interest in women as actors. If White women were confined to the domestic sphere, so too would be their actions. As Catherine Hall writes in her introduction to the third edition of *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*

Gender as an analytic term, a way of asking historical or sociological questions about women's and men's lives, took years to emerge. It was to take still longer to critique those binaries. In the early years of the women's movement we were concerned with understanding women's experience and finding a collective voice.¹⁷

However early feminist writers on the fur trade like Van Kirk and Jennifer S.H. Brown may have come to frame their important contributions to the field of fur trade history, the trend since then has been to an interest in women in the fur trade that has been centred largely on and around Indigenous women and their experiences as actors, as producers, diplomats, partners, and as mothers. The interventions of White women like Lady Selkirk and her activities relating to the HBC and the Red River Settlement are noticeably absent from the explosion of interest in social history that reinvigorated fur trade studies beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s and

¹⁶ D. Turner, "Thoughts on Affect: Reading Harold Innis, Donald Creighton, and Sylvia Van Kirk," MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, 2016. doi:10.11575/PRISM/28432http://hdl.handle.net/11023/3439, 7. See also Brian Gallagher, "The Whig Interpretation of the History of Red River," MA thesis, University of British Columbia, Department of History, 1986; Brian Gallagher, "A Re-examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River," *Native Studies Review* 4, 1-2 (1988): 25-66.

¹⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*. (New York: Routledge, 2018), xvi.

continued forward from there. Lord Selkirk's biographer, the noted Red River Settlement historian, Jack Bumsted, while sometimes mentioning Lady Selkirk, mostly in relationship to her husband, never published a focused work about her. But a close look at Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk's life as it related to the creation of the Red River Settlement, her role in the fur trade wars, and her interventions in the operations of the colony as these wars wound down and the HBC and NWC amalgamated, offers important insights into the opportunities and boundaries that informed the lives of upper-class women like Wedderburn Douglas. At the same time, a study of her life in this period shines a little light on some of the historiographical gaps in an important aspect of not only fur trade history, but the history of empire and the violences of empire, the agency and involvement of upper class, non-Indigenous women like Wedderburn Douglas in networks of empire and of violence.

Beginning with her marriage to Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk in 1807, and continuing through the period from 1815 to 1819 when she and her young and growing family lived in North America to facilitate their engagement in the fur trade wars, this chapter will examine Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk's life in terms of the spider's webs of networks in which she operated. These were networks that connected family and business interests, networks that she personally and deliberately managed, and networks that could transmit violences. At least from the moment of her marriage, Wedderburn Douglas was imbricated in the growing violence in the fur trade, as members of her immediate family vied with members of the NWC for a controlling interest in the HBC. Lord Selkirk's introduction of a White settler community at Red River only fanned the flames of these violences further. By 1815 the violence that had come to characterize the fur trade in this period was manifesting in this new settlement. It was at this point that Wedderburn Douglas and her family arrived in Montreal, convinced that they would have a better chance of success if they were closer to the action. By examining surviving correspondence, supported by other documentation for this period, it is possible to see the direct and intentional interventions and contributions Wedderburn Douglas made to the fur trade wars, and to consider how her skilful construction and management of social and business networks contributed to this.

Wedderburn Douglas' correspondence during her residency in Montreal offers a window on her world, a window that provides insight into how her actions were imbricated in the violence of the fur trade wars. Wedderburn Douglas' own correspondence shows that she was directly involved in the planning and in the execution of plans relating to the Red River Settlement, particularly those connected with the actions of her partner, Lord Selkirk, that, by working in, through, and on her family/business networks, Wedderburn Douglas was an actor in the colonial violences that manifested in the fur trade in the years from 1816 to 1818.

Wedderburn Douglas' webs of relationship, as has been seen with other webs in previous chapters, were not strictly bounded, although people might distinguish between a personal relationship and a business one, there was no binary that distinctly separated business networks from personal ones. In Wedderburn Douglas' world there was significant overlap. Similarly, although the creation of these networks could be gendered, both women and men could participate in their creation and expression. As Wedderburn Douglas' experiences show, social and business networks could offer access to power, resources, and to information. These webs of relationship could allow people to travel out from the centre through empire with the support of others in the network, or, as in the case of Wedderburn Douglas' relationship with Lady Sherbrooke and her husband demonstrates, could be constructed far from home. However, and wherever they were constructed, webs of relationship were critical to the work Wedderburn Douglas did while in North America, work that was deeply imbricated in the violence that reverberated through the fur trade at the time.

Family, Connection, and the Fur Trade

Wedderburn Douglas' spider's webs of relationship connected her with wealth and power. Jean Wedderburn was born on the third of May 1786 to James Wedderburn (sometimes Colvile) of Ochiltree and his wife Isabella Blackburn or Colvile, the heiress of Ochiltree and Craigflower, at the family's Scottish Invernesk estate. Her siblings included John Wedderburn (who died a young man in 1799), Andrew Wedderburn Colvile and Peter Wedderburn-Ogilvy, who have already been mentioned, as well as James Wedderburn, who would become the Solicitor General

of Scotland.¹⁸ Growing up as a member of an extensive and important Scottish legal and business family, Wedderburn Douglas' life was one of privilege and connection; but privilege and connection underwritten by slavery. When she married Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk at her home, Invernesk, a property that had been purchased by her father with proceeds from his West Indian plantations, on the 21st of November 1807, the money for her marriage settlement came from her family's West Indian holdings, from the violence of plantation slavery.¹⁹

From the outset, the story of Jean Wedderburn's marriage to Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk and the story of how they and their extended families became involved in the HBC reveal the complex ways that their spider's webs of personal and family relationship interconnected with those of business. How the Wedderburns and Thomas Douglas came to hold controlling stock in the HBC has been often told. In the early 1800s, the HBC was floundering and ripe for a takeover. On the one hand, Sir Alexander Mackenzie and other members of the Canadian fur trade, particularly the NWC, saw access to the HBC's charter, which gave it monopolistic control over shipping into and out of Hudson Bay, as critical to their plans for North American expansion. On the other hand, Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk saw the HBC's territories as a perfect opportunity to establish a third North American agricultural colony.²⁰

Lord Selkirk had been introduced to the popular Jean Wedderburn at a party in 1807, by her best friend and sister-in-law, wife of her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colville, Mary Louisa Eden

¹⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, 306; Baptism: "Jean Wedderburn," from *Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

¹⁹ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "Lady Jean Selkirk (née Wedderburn)" available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643561>, Accessed 12 December 2020; "Jean Wedderburn Colville," marriage 21 November 1807, in *Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561-1910* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, 305, 308.

²⁰ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 181-188; W. Kaye Lamb, "MACKENZIE, Sir ALEXANDER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mackenzie_alexander_5E.html; Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System'," 12.

Colville, Lady Mary Louisa.²¹ A marriage soon followed. In a letter to Lord Grenville, Lady Mary Louisa's father commented that

1807 November 14. Eden Farm. -- . Lord Selkirk is not much to be admired either for his political conduct or for his eloquence, but he is amiable and good in private life, and therefore I am glad that he is to marry Miss Wedderburn, the sister and particular friend of my Louisa. Lady Auckland has the great responsibility of buying the wedding clothes and laces.²²

The couple were married within the year. Correspondence between Wedderburn Douglas and her husband, as well as with her brother Andrew, her cousin and brother-in-law John Wedderburn Halkett, and with Halkett's wife, Lord Selkirk's sister Katherine, suggests a marriage based in mutual respect. But perhaps the clearest glimpse of Wedderburn Douglas' view of marriage comes from a single line in a later letter to her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colville describing Sir John and Lady Katherine Pyndar Sherbrooke's relationship. "I discovered that like other people they read and criticize one another's letters," she wrote.²³ Marriage, in Wedderburn Douglas' eyes, was a partnership, a relationship of mutuality. It seems, too, that she saw this kind of marriage relationship as a common one among her peers.

Events relating to the HBC and to the interventions of the Wedderburn family into business networks at the time of the Wedderburn Douglas marriage were unsettling. By the time of the marriage, Mackenzie was beginning to realize that Selkirk's plans for a colony were far more extensive and potentially dangerous than he had at first believed.²⁴ What transpired next was a whirlwind of business activity. Selkirk had already begun purchasing HBC stock in 1806. Then

²¹ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 165-166.

²² Bickley et al. *Report on the manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue*, 144.

²³ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 311L, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Lady Selkirk to Mr. [Andrew] Colville, Quebec, 24 August 1816.

²⁴ W. Kaye Lamb, "MACKENZIE, Sir ALEXANDER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mackenzie_alexander_5E.html.

in 1808, Jean Wedderburn Douglas' cousin John Wedderburn Halkett (who would marry Lord Selkirk's sister Katherine in 1815), began buying stock in the HBC. Meanwhile, Wedderburn Douglas' brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, looking to diversify his business interests at a time when slavery, the linchpin of his sugar operations, was clearly on a trajectory to end, saw the HBC, which he was already doing business with as a supplier of liquor and sugar, as an undervalued company that could be turned around fairly quickly with the application of modern business practices; practices that Tolly Bradford argues, were forged in the web of slavery-related companies Wedderburn Colvile oversaw.²⁵ Lord Selkirk's interests in the HBC had initially been sparked by Sir Alexander Mackenzie's writing and subsequent conversations Selkirk had had with him, and the relationship between Mackenzie and the Selkirks early in their marriage appears to have been a warm one, as Lady Selkirk wrote to her sister-in-law Katherine Halkett in February of 1809 that they had had Sir Alex Mackenzie to dinner on Sunday, 19th.²⁶ On the 22nd of April that year Wedderburn Douglas gave birth to a son. The couple named him Dunbar James, Lord Daer.²⁷ At this point, Mackenzie seems to have expected that a relatively inexpensive purchase of stock would give him control in the HBC, and that Selkirk's plans were modest enough that they were of little consequence to Mackenzie's aspirations. This soon changed, however.

The interventions of the Wedderburn and Douglas family in the course and direction of the HBC's operations continued, while on the 8th of January 1811, Wedderburn Douglas gave birth to a daughter; the couple named her Isabella Helen. Meanwhile, the family's dealings with the HBC expanded.²⁸ Wedderburn Douglas' brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile had begun buying

²⁵ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 181-188; Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System'," 12; W. Kaye Lamb, "MACKENZIE, Sir ALEXANDER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mackenzie_alexander_5E.html.

²⁶ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, "Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes," extract from letter, J[ean]. S[elkirk]. to K. [atherine Halkett], 22 February 1809.

²⁷ Baptism: "Dunbar James Douglas," *England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975* [database on-line]. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

²⁸ Baptism: Isabella Helen Douglas, London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: DR/T/10/031 Original data: *Church of England Parish Registers, 1538-1812*.

Company stock on the 2nd of January 1810, and, as Bradford notes, before the month was out, had himself voted onto the Company's Governing Committee. In February he was promoting a plan to reorganize the Company's fur trade operations, soon known as the New System, or retrenchment plan, which he submitted to the Committee in March.²⁹ Colvile's retrenchment plan included both a significant change in the way that the HBC was organized, and plans for colonization in the HBC's territory.³⁰

Between Wedderburn Douglas' cousin, John Halkett, her husband, Lord Selkirk, and her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile's stock holdings, by the time the question of a land grant to Selkirk for his plans to develop a colony at Red River had come before the HBC's committee in the spring of 1811, the group held enough stock to give them a controlling interest in the Company, and Wedderburn Colvile had been elected to the HBC's committee of management. Halkett would join the HBC's London Committee in November of that year.³¹ In his article "From competition to union," K. G. Davies, notes that Sir Alexander Mackenzie had probably not purchased enough HBC stock to control the Company because he believed Lord Selkirk to be an ally, an opinion that A.S. Morton has also expressed; the two had begun purchasing HBC stock in conjunction in 1806, and Mackenzie initially believed, between the two of them they would hold a controlling interest. In fact, it was not even necessary to hold 51 percent of the voting shares to control the Company. Not every shareholder always exercised their right to vote, when the general special court voted on the Company's land grant to Lord Selkirk, the shares voted at

London, England: London Metropolitan Archives. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

²⁹ Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System'," 12; Scott Stephen, "The Fork in the Road: Red River, Retrenchment, and the Struggle for the Future of the Hudson's Bay Company," *Manitoba History*, Number 71, Winter 2013; Lord Selkirk and Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1799-1809*, xvi.

³⁰ Colin Robertson, R. Harvey Fleming, and E. E. Rich. *Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book: September 1817 to September 1822* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), xxxiii, xxxviii.

³¹ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 187-188, 200-201; Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System',"; Shirlee Anne Smith, "HALKETT, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed November 9, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/halkett_john_8E.html.

the meeting represented less than half of the Company's capital, Lord Selkirk's part of this was an even smaller fraction of that.³²

In his biography of Lord Selkirk, Jack Bumsted argues against the popular view that Selkirk's interest in the HBC had always been about a humanitarian concern for establishing a colony in their territories. Rather, Bumsted states, "Selkirk's first interest was in the Hudson's Bay Company and its reform, and Red River colonization was imposed upon him as a neat and tidy solution to a whole series of problems." The establishment of a colony pivoted what was a worrisome legal opinion, that the Company could successfully press land claims but could not expect to sustain its monopolistic charter, to its own advantage.³³ As well as being part of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile's over-all retrenching plan, a colonial settlement could enhance the Company's land claims, as an agricultural settlement would engage the symbols familiar to English concepts of possession. As Patricia Seed notes, "erecting fences, growing hedges, introducing domesticated animals, using the English fertilizer (manure) and ploughs...all had in common the expression of colonial authority not through written texts or documents but through actions."³⁴

The introduction of White settler families could also change the narrative. In the public mind, attacks on fur traders by other fur traders might be one thing, but attacks on women and children were something quite else. In a pamphlet published during the heyday of the troubles at Red River, *A narrative of transactions in the Red River country: ...*, North Wester Alexander Greenfield Macdonell wrote that, as the first settlers arrived at the fledgling colony, he had been approached by an Indigenous leader who, drawing his attention to the settlement's women and children, said "those women with the white caps, and those white children – to-day I am truly alarmed." The leader had been told by the HBC, Macdonell reported, that "by the time the leaves would fall, we should see a great number of Whites arrive, who were to make gardens on our

³² K. G. Davies, "From competition to union," *Minn. Hist.* (St Paul), 40 (1966–67): 166–177. 175-176.

³³ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 193.

³⁴ Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38.

lands, and drive all the Canadian Traders away.”³⁵ A great deal of ink was spilled in the propaganda that circulated during the troubles at Red River, and how accurate Macdonell’s account really was it is impossible to say. However, Macdonell and the NWC’s feelings, reflected in this account, summarize the concerns that reverberated through the fur trade as Lord Selkirk and the HBC embarked on plans to settle Red River. In the dry tinder of the atmosphere of tensions that existed between the HBC and NWC, the decision in 1811 by the HBC’s shareholders to grant Lord Selkirk 116,000 acres of territory set off an intensity of conflict that would take a full decade to even begin to resolve.³⁶

So much has been written about the history of the Red River Settlement and the violence that beset it during its early years that for present purposes a brief chronological survey of the earlier events in the establishment of the colony at Red River should suffice. The history of the colony after Lord Selkirk’s death will be touched on in a later chapter. From its very beginnings, Lord Selkirk’s establishment of the colony in the face of the ongoing violence in the fur trade was fraught with confusion and literal physical altercations that drew the struggles between the NWC and HBC and debates in England around monopolies vs free trade into the heart of the North American continent, and into the lives of Indigenous people in the region. In the summer of 1811, Miles Macdonell, whom Selkirk had designated Governor of the new colony, departed Stornoway in Scotland with a group of labourers. This small advance party was intended to travel to Red River and prepare for the arrival of the first group of settlers the following year. The departure of the group was disrupted by an alarming letter, probably published by the NWC’s Simon McGillivray, under the name “A Highlander;” the unrealistic and inflated promises of Selkirk’s colonial recruiters probably also contributed to the chaos. When the ships did finally get away, it was too late for the group to land and make their way to Red River. A difficult winter along the Bay followed. The recruitment and transportation of settlers from

³⁵Alexander Greenfield Macdonell, *A narrative of transactions in the Red River country: From the commencement of the operations of the Earl of Selkirk, till the summer of the year 1816: With a map, exhibiting part of the route of the Canadian fur traders in the interior of North America, and comprising the scene of contest between Lord Selkirk and the North-West Company* (London: Printed by B. McMillan, 1819), 6-7.

³⁶ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 201.

Ireland and Scotland began in 1812, and continued in the following years, but this, too, was often fraught with difficulties. Life in the settlement itself during this period was never smooth. Amidst agricultural failures, game scarcity, and political antagonism, anxiety and food insecurity marked the early years of the settlement. Miles Macdonell's famous Pemmican Proclamation of 8 January 1814 only served to create even greater hardship and more strife. By 1815, the settlers were disheartened and under pressure from the NWC to leave. In June of 1815, the settlers abandoned the settlement following a series of violent altercations with opposition fur traders and allied Indigenous peoples, many of them Métis. In the wake of the hardships and the violence, many of the settlers took up NWC offers of transportation to the East, while a small handful took shelter at Jack River (near present day Norway House). At the same time, the colony was still recruiting in Britain. The reconstituted colony, composed of a small handful of earlier settlers who had agreed to return to Red River, and augmented by new candidates from Britain, were again caught in the crossfire of violence between the NWC and the HBC and its colony in June of 1816, at Frog Plain, or Seven Oaks. There, 22 men, a mix of colony officers, servants, and colonists died in a confrontation with a group of NWC workers who had been attempting to transport pemmican through the country.³⁷

North America, New Challenges, New Relationships

By this time, the fur trade wars were being fought in the political arena, and in the court of public opinion, as well as literally on the ground. In response to the ongoing violence, and in an effort to buoy up the settlement and prevail in the region and in the fur trade, by the summer of 1815, the Selkirks, Thomas Douglas, Jean Wedderburn Douglas, and their two small children Dunbar James, now about six, and his sister Isabella Helen, about four and half, prepared to leave Britain and travel to Montreal.³⁸ Departing from Liverpool in early September on the sailing ship the

³⁷ Lord Selkirk and Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1799-1809*, xix- lvi; John Morgan Gray, "DOUGLAS, THOMAS, Baron DAER and SHORTCLEUCH, 5th Earl of SELKIRK," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_thomas_5E.html.

³⁸ Lord Selkirk and Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1799-1809*, xlvi.

Pacific, the family arrived, along with Dr. John Allan a former Royal Navy surgeon and now Lord Selkirk's personal physician, in New York at the end of October, 1815.³⁹

In the context of the British Empire, letter writing was a powerful tool not only for communicating important information, but for creating, managing, and maintaining relationships. Wedderburn Douglas' surviving correspondence demonstrates not only the truth of this, but that she was adept at using this medium to connect and communicate throughout all the spider's webs of relationship she interacted with and through. As they were waiting to sail, Wedderburn Douglas wrote to "Mrs. Colvile," almost certainly her friend and sister-in-law Louisa Eden Colvile that Lord Selkirk was sleeping well and getting needed rest. Throughout her correspondence, Wedderburn regularly updated family and friends about Selkirk's health, a practice that had begun early in their marriage. Arriving with his family in Montreal from New York the evening of November third, Lord Selkirk immediately turned his attention to the settlement, which he had learned upon landing in New York, had been dispersed the previous June.⁴⁰ At some point between their arrival and February of 1816, possibly as early as November, the family moved into the former home of Sir John Johnson. The house was purchased by the Molson family in December of 1815, and by May of 1816 the Molsons had begun the process of converting the building into a premier hotel, the Mansion House, by adding two wings to the structure. Molson family biographer Karen Molson believes that Lord Selkirk,

³⁹ *Montreal Herald*, November 4th: "Yesterday Evening" in Lawrence Maurice Wilson, *This Was Montreal in 1814, 1815, 1816 and 1817: Life in Canada's Metropolis As Culled Verbatim from the Editorial, News and Advertising Columns of the Montreal Herald*, 1960, 48; AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett. Excerpts and notes, extract, J.[ean] Selkirk to Mrs. Colvile, Everton Coffee House, Liverpool, Sept. 5, 1815; LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 146, Sept^r 8th on board the *Pacific*, Earl of Selkirk to Alex^r McDonald Esq of Dalilia, Liverpool, available online at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c20/150?r=0&s=1. Accessed 12 December 2020; Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 277.

⁴⁰AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett. Excerpts and notes, extract, J.[ean] Selkirk to Mrs. Colvile, Everton Coffee House, Liverpool, Sept. 5, 1815; *Richmond Enquirer*, 28 October 1815, 2; *Winchester Gazette*, 31 October 1815, 3; *The Observer*, London, 7 July 1816, 2; "Narrative of Dr. John Allan, formerly Surgeon of Royal Navy," LAC Selkirk Papers, f 13777 ff. available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c13/604?r=0&s=4. Accessed 12 December 2020; Bumsted *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 277, 280-281.

Wedderburn Douglas and their children remained in the building during the renovations. The famed Beaver Club, a group whose membership was strongly skewed in favour of the NWC met at the Mansion House for its last meeting before suspending its activities for some years on the 21st of January, not even three weeks after the birth of the Selkirks' third child, Katherine Jean, who had arrived on the evening of the fourth of January.⁴¹ Over the fall and winter of 1815, Lord Selkirk met with members of the NWC in discussions about a possible agreement between the NWC and HBC in light of the escalating violence that was now spreading beyond the fur trade and touching the lives of White settlers.⁴² In the end, the discussions came to nothing. In January of 1816, Selkirk and his physician John Allan travelled to York (present day Toronto) to examine some of the settlers who had abandoned the settlement after the troubles of 1815.⁴³ "Lord Selkirk was six weeks at York in Upper Canada, and his time has been most fully occupied both before and since," Wedderburn Douglas wrote to her sister-in-law Katherine Halkett.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *Northwest to the Sea: A Biography of William McGillivray* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1975), 151; Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 281; Karen Molson, *The Molsons: Their Lives and Times: 1780-2000*, Kindle Edition (Firefly Books, 2001) location 1480-1482, 1494; Shirley Woods, *The Molson Saga, 1763-1983* (Doubleday Canada, 1983), 58; Alfred Dubuc, "MOLSON, JOHN (1763-1836)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/molson_john_1763_1836_7E.html. Marjory Wilkins Campbell suggests the family had rented the house from John Johnson when they first arrived in Montreal. The finding aid for the Molson family's papers at Library and Archives Canada indicates that the Selkirks may have rented from the Molson family beginning around February of 1816, however the letter the finding aid points to has not been located, and other possible leads have not proven fruitful. With thanks to the Molson Family for granting permission to explore their papers. It is quite possible that the family rented from Johnson and then from the Molsons when they took over the house. On the Beaver Club meetings, see Burpee, L. J. (1924). *The Beaver Club, Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 3 (1), 73–92. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300038a>; *The Kingston Gazette*, 25 January 1817, 3.

⁴² Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 282-284.

⁴³ Narrative of Dr. John Allan, formerly Surgeon of Royal Navy, LAC Selkirk Papers vol. 51, pp 13777 ff. Available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c13/604?r=0&s=4, https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c13/605?r=0&s=4. Accessed 12 December 2020; Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 277, 280-281.

⁴⁴ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, "Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett. Excerpts and notes, extract, J.[ean] S.[elkirk] to Kate, Montreal, March 27, 1816.

Wedderburn Douglas was soon to find herself operating on her own in Montreal, as her husband prepared to travel west into the heart of the violence. In March of 1816, Jean Baptiste Lagimonière delivered the news to the Douglas's that the colony at Red River was in even more dire straits than it had been before.⁴⁵ Believing that the law must be on his side, Lord Selkirk left Montreal and his family in June 1816 with a contingent of soldiers and demobbed military, headed to Red River.⁴⁶ Wedderburn Douglas may have only just recently realized she was pregnant as she saw her partner off.⁴⁷

Direct Interventions

In Montreal Wedderburn Douglas' tactics embraced and leveraged the importance of webs of relationship, and women's roles in their creation and maintenance. In 1916, Chester Martin wrote

At Quebec, Lady Selkirk became a favoured guest at the Castle of St. Louis and directed the affairs of the settlement so effectively in Selkirk's absence that

⁴⁵Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk A Life*, 291; Lynne Champagne, "LAGIMONIERE, JEAN-BAPTISTE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lagimoniere_jean_baptiste_8E.html; John Morgan Gray, "DOUGLAS, THOMAS, Baron DAER and SHORTCLEUCH, 5th Earl of SELKIRK," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_thomas_5E.html. Oral tradition is that Lagimoniere had burst into the Selkirks' Hogmanay celebrations, however, most sources put the time later in the year.

⁴⁶ In the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Gray states that Selkirk left May first, however, in *Lord Selkirk of Red River*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1964), he dates Selkirk's departure to June of that year. Bumsted and Martin agree he left in June. John Morgan Gray, "DOUGLAS, THOMAS, Baron DAER and SHORTCLEUCH, 5th Earl of SELKIRK," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 9, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_thomas_5E.html; Gray, *Lord Selkirk of Red River*, 175; Chester Martin, *Lord Selkirk's work in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1916), 116; Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 331.

⁴⁷ Katherine Jean Douglas was baptized 9 February 1817, sponsors Lord and Lady Sherbrooke, and Lady Katherine Halkett, wife of John Halkett, and Lord Selkirk's sister. The Note "father absent" appears in the register. Baptism: Katherine Jean Douglas, Anglican Christ Church Cathedral, Actes, Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.*, Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

McGillivray found the tables completely turned. Even in details of policy and management it is not difficult to trace the growing reliance which Selkirk placed upon the clear-headedness and sound judgement of his wife.⁴⁸

While Martin's assessment captures some of the depth of Wedderburn's competence and involvement in the business of the HBC and the settlement of Red River, it positions her actions in the shadow of her husband. Surviving documentary sources, however, paint a significantly different picture. Lord Selkirk would not return to the east until January of 1818. On his way to Red River, which he would not reach before the summer of 1817, he would capture and occupy the NWC's Fort William, ignore warrants for his own arrest, and arrest nine NWC partners. From there he went on to purchase all of the fort's supplies and furs from the remaining NWC partner Daniel McKenzie, who was known for his alcohol dependency, paying for the goods with an estate in Scotland. As Selkirk's biographer John Morgan Gray writes "He was later to refer to his "ill judged conduct" at Fort William, and certainly it lost him sympathy and further impugned the purity of his motives as a colonizer."⁴⁹ Wedderburn Douglas, intervening in the increasingly violent course things were taking, recognized the danger of his actions, writing to Selkirk "I hope you will give up to Stuart's opinion on this point, Mackenzie having been your prisoner is so alarming a fact that no [casual] innocence should have tempted you to brave it."⁵⁰

Alone in Montreal, with only letter writing to connect her to both her family and allies in Britain and with her husband as he travelled inland, Wedderburn Douglas acted not only as a centre of

⁴⁸ Martin, *Lord Selkirk's Work in Canada*, 115.

⁴⁹ John Morgan Gray, "DOUGLAS, THOMAS, Baron DAER and SHORTCLEUCH, 5th Earl of SELKIRK," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_thomas_5E.html; University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary's Isle, vol. iii, 390 C, Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from Lady S[elkirk] to Lord S[elkirk], Montreal, 1816.

⁵⁰ University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary's Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from Lady S[elkirk] to Lord S[elkirk], Montreal, 1816.

communication between her husband, brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, cousin John Halkett, and the numerous agents and lawyers involved in the complex business and personal dealings of her family and the HBC, she actively participated in the business of colony and fur trade, making independent decisions and providing advice and counsel. Here there are glimpses not only of Wedderburn Douglas's concern for her husband, but also for the important part she played in planning and strategy in their business relationship, a business that was immersed in very literal violence at the time, and that would lead to the colonial violence of Indigenous land loss through what is commonly known as the Selkirk Treaty when her partner Lord Selkirk arrived at Red River.

Her correspondence also offers glimpses of how interconnected business and personal lives could be, a connectedness that is particularly evident in the extracts from correspondence preserved in Chester Martin's papers at the Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto and in John Perry Pritchett's notebooks at the Archives of Ontario. Unfortunately, much of the correspondence Martin and Pritchett had access to has been subsequently lost, but the notes that they did preserve, especially when read alongside the correspondence collected in the Selkirk Papers, shows that while people had an awareness of business and the personal as categories, boundaries between the two were extremely permeable. On the 19th of May 1817 Wedderburn Douglas wrote to her brother Andrew, "Mr. Colvile," that "[lawyer James] Stuart is in love, which is desperate work, I had enough without the tender provision to contend with, it is a great botheration which has crossed my path before. Poor [lawyer Samuel] Gale was crossed in his love...I was glad Gale was gone first, for he was but half cured."⁵¹ In 1816, Wedderburn Douglas wrote to her husband "Your plan of our joining you this summer is quite 'en l'ai[re]. For Heaven's sake be less sanguine, you really frighten me, and your 'pleasing visions' were so out of unison with my anxiety and wretchedness at the time that I was quite upset between the

⁵¹ University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary's Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from Lady Selkirk to Mr. Wedderburn, 19 May 1817.

two.” In the same letter she wrote “The plan I have laid for you is, to [retire] within your own boundary early, go on to Red River with the Commissioners and return here in the fall.”⁵²

Despite her frustration and concerns with Lord Selkirk’s improvisations on his trip west, Wedderburn Douglas seems to have been genuinely fond of him. If he had a failing, she reflected, it was that he could be too open and trusting. On October 26th, 1817, she wrote to John Halkett that Selkirk had been tested by “a series of letters that must have annoyed him to the greatest degree. We are all very cool and candid when not attacked, but no temper but his own could have stood the repeated fire. He is far too unsuspecting, and with the worst opinion possible of them in the lump these wretches deceived him in detail.”⁵³ But her concerns were never restricted only to the domestic. Turning her attention to what was happening in Britain, on the 20th of February, 1817, Wedderburn Douglas wrote to her cousin and brother-in-law, John Halkett in England, “I wish you might all agree about moving in the House of Commons, it is only for [her brother-in-law, Sir] James Montgomery or some ministerial friend, meekly to ask information this would be the effectual mode of bringing Mr. Gouldburne to his little senses, and you have ample documents in your hands....Oh I think I could touch up Mr. Gouldburne handsomely.”⁵⁴

On the ground in Montreal, Wedderburn Colvile exercised her own initiative, intervening in the fur trade wars in practical ways which included privately hiring, outfitting, and successfully deploying, despite opposition, a contingent of demobbed soldiers. Writing to her brother, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, in a letter dated 19 June 1817, she described how a group of des

⁵² University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary’s Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms, Extract from Lady S[elkirk] to Lord S[elkirk], Montreal, 1816.

⁵³ University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary’s Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from Lady S to Halkett, 26 October, 1817.

⁵⁴ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes. This was Henry Goulbourne, at the time the Under Secretary of State for War and Colonies, and, by coincidence, an absentee plantation owner in his own right. History of Parliament, available at <http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1820-1832/member/goulburn-henry-1784-1856>. Accessed 12 December 2020. Exploring Surrey’s Past, available at https://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/black_history/surrey/henry-goulburn/henry-goulburn-jamaican/. Accessed 12 December 2020.

Meurons soldiers she had personally recruited and outfitted, and whom she was preparing to send west, had been intercepted and interrogated by William Bachelor Coltman and his group. Coltman, who had been appointed to investigate and report on the increasingly tense and bloody competition between the two rival fur trade companies was at the time himself preparing to leave Montreal for Red River. Claiming that they had sworn statements that the Meurons were being sent to do mischief and not to keep the peace, the NWC urged Coltman to detain the soldiers. As Coltman and his group interrogated the Meurons, one of Selkirk's officers, Archy (Archibald) McDonald went to Wedderburn Douglas for orders. McDonald "arrived as I was dropping asleep thinking the bustle was over. I sent him to [almost certainly Montreal attorney James] Stuart, and sent them both out by break of day on Monday morning to La Chine to get it settled." With McDonald and Stuart back at LaChine, the interrogation continued until, finally, Stuart had believed it was done and left. But after Stuart's leaving, Coltman and his group resumed, until McDonald made an impassioned statement that there was no malicious intent in the group. "Then they called the Sergeants and Sergeant's wife, and after examining them declared themselves satisfied, and our men went off in high glee, 47 in number, a very effective addition to the Possee comitatis of Red River, and I plume myself much on them, as they are my throw entirely," she told her brother.⁵⁵

But if life at the centre of a spider's web of relationships that stretched between the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in the heart of North America, the West Indies, and Great Britain, between colony and fur trade, and between her husband Thomas Douglas the Earl of Selkirk, her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, her brother-in-law/cousin John Halkett, and another brother-in-law Sir James Montgomery, could be a source of pride, it could also be lonely and frustrating. Under the pressure, Wedderburn Douglas could, and did, lose her temper. "Once more I humbly beg pardon for every word I may have written implying impatience or irritation, but I pray you to remember that I am placed as it were in the focus," she wrote in a letter to

⁵⁵ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 414 ff, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Lady Selkirk to Andrew Colvile, 19 June 1817; In collaboration with Roy C. Dalton, "COLTMAN, WILLIAM BACHELER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/coltman_william_bachelor_6E.html.

Halkett on November 2nd, 1817. “To receive shots in every direction, & I suffer twice what all the rest of the party undergoes once,” she explained, was a heavy burden.⁵⁶

Wedderburn Douglas’ role in Montreal also involved analysing and synthesizing information and acting on the results. In December of 1817, she wrote to her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile that she had not written sooner “having been hard at work to get the depositions [relating to the fur trade wars] copied and compared. Besides this I have had a great deal to talk over, and I did not feel as if I had digested Gale’s budget sufficiently to write,” she added. In the same letter, she told Wedderburn Colvile that her request to Sir John Sherbrooke to sign a subscription fund to bring Catholic clergy to Red River had been “rebuffed;” Sherbrooke would not sign unless it was presented to him by Coltman. “It is hard if the plan should fail too for want of a little suavity, so I suppose I must try my skill on Mr. Coltman. It is better that I should ask a favour from him than from any of the rest of the band,” she wrote.⁵⁷ Wedderburn Douglas’ interventions could include personnel matters as well. In a letter to John Halkett dated November 2nd, 1817, Wedderburn Douglas stated “what I principally wish to say now is that I do not think [probably Robert] Dickson would do for your Governor, I am told he drinks considerably. He is quick tempered also, and altogether too much of the Indian trader for the head of the H.B. concerns.”⁵⁸ By late October Lord Selkirk, his health clearly compromised, and facing endless legal battles as well as a public sort of trial in the newspapers of the day was preparing to travel back to England, leaving, as Jack Bumsted notes, “Lady Selkirk and his family behind in Montreal to tie up the loose ends of his business still remaining.”⁵⁹ On the 26th of October 1818 Wedderburn Douglas wrote to Samuel Gale, “I am set in my own mind that it is no unnecessary

⁵⁶ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett. Excerpts and notes.

⁵⁷ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 677-680, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection. Lady Selkirk to Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, 18 December 1817; Sian Bumsted, “Lady Selkirk,” 38.

⁵⁸ Robert S. Allen, “DICKSON, ROBERT,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dickson_robert_6E.html University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary’s Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from Lady Selkirk to Mr. Wedderburn.

⁵⁹ Bumsted, Lord, *Selkirk a Life*, 399.

sacrifice, to return would not have made up at all for the present opportunity, my remaining leads everyone to expect him back in the spring, & his going home only gives courage & spirits to our friends, we could never excite again this interest that is now left.⁶⁰

New Relationships

As Sian Bumsted noted two decades ago, the letters contained in the Selkirk Papers alone contain ample evidence of Wedderburn Douglas' involvement in strategic planning and business relating to the HBC and the Red River Settlement, as well as her part in the machinery of business, and her personal interventions that fuelled the violence that attended both. This was labour that directly contributed to the work of colonization and the fur trade violence that seemed to follow both the North Westers and the colony and HBC officers and servants wherever they went. But this evidence has yet to be deeply interrogated by historians. Even more overlooked is the importance of Wedderburn Douglas' work creating webs of relationship in Montreal. When the family arrived in the city they were, literally, "strangers in a strange land."⁶¹ Montreal, as has been seen in earlier chapters, had, by the time they arrived there, the centre of the Canadian fur trade, a history of opposing the HBC that had persisted for almost as long as the Company had been in existence. The eastern fur traders' nickname, the "Pedlars from Montreal" says much. The Selkirks arrived in a city where fur trade roots ran deep, and the eastern fur traders' spiders' webs of relationship were thick, entangled, and expansive. If the family and the HBC were ever to progress, let alone prevail, in their endeavours, they needed their own webs of relationship to give them access to resources, to information, to power, and to support.

Jean Wedderburn Douglas certainly knew this truth long before she and her children arrived in Montreal with Lord Selkirk. Once there, she almost immediately set to work creating, maintaining, and managing relationships that defy any easy categorization as public or private. Perhaps the most productive source for identifying these relationships are Samuel Gale's papers located in the McGill University Library's Rare Books and Special Collections, and in the

⁶⁰ University of Toronto, Fisher Rare Books Library, Correspondence at St. Mary's Isle, vol. iii, 390 C. Ms Coll Chester Martin Papers 00080, Extract from JS to "Kate."

⁶¹ This often-used phrase comes from Exodus 2:22, "a stranger in a strange land."

McCord Museum's archives in Montreal.⁶² These collections contain correspondence reaching into the 1830s, including letters between Gale and Wedderburn Douglas that not only testify to their own enduring relationship, one that wove the personal with the public, but show that Wedderburn Douglas remembered other friends she had made while in Montreal long after she had left the city.

Wedderburn Douglas almost certainly met Gale through his work as a lawyer for Lord Selkirk and the HBC, and much of their correspondence reflects this. But their relationship also shows genuine fondness and warmth. When, in 1817, Gale headed west with Commissioner William Bachelor Coltman's investigating party to advise and support Lord Selkirk, Wedderburn Douglas wrote to her brother that Coltman had refused to take Gale in his canoe. One step ahead of the game, she had foreseen this possibility and had had a canoe readied for Gale, "and as many comforts as I could procure for my champion, and a little flag which he demanded with the arms and motto which had taken his fancy amazingly when he saw them on the seal."⁶³ Under the strain of the excitement and travel surrounding him, Gale may have written something to Wedderburn Douglas that he later felt strained propriety and appears to have asked that she destroy the documents. In reply she answered "I shall do as you desire about your letters _ they were to me very pleasing _ as they were written without restraint & under the influence of the feelings of the moment. I imagine we are all susceptible to the flattery (if such it really be called) conveyed in this perfect confidence when it comes from those we esteem."⁶⁴

As some of the names that appear in their correspondence suggest, Gale was not only a friend to Wedderburn Douglas, but one of her connections to other relationships in and around Montreal. And, as their letters continued into the 1830s, it is also evident that they both retained and valued

⁶² McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds; McCord Museum, Archives, Samuel Gale fonds (P199).

⁶³ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 414 ff, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Montreal 19th [June] 1817, Lady Selkirk to Mr Colvile; J.-C. Bonenfant, "GALE, SAMUEL (1783-1865)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003—, accessed November 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gale_samuel_1783_1865_9E.html.

⁶⁴ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, Montreal July 5th 1817 Saturday.

their relationship. The Stuarts Wedderburn Douglas wrote about were almost certainly Sir James Stuart and his wife Elizabeth Robertson (they had married in 1818, after the thwarted love sickness mentioned earlier).⁶⁵ A letter preserved in the Selkirk Papers, penned by Gale from Montreal on the 1st of May 1821 lays out a very basic framework of some of the relationships Wedderburn Douglas had sought and tended in Montreal.⁶⁶ “Many changes have not occurred here of late among the acquaintances of your Ladyship,” began Gale. Two of the families Gale mentioned in his letter were almost certainly those of his law partners, James Stuart and Michael O’Sullivan, who also acted for the HBC and the colony. “M^r. Stuart walks out occasionally, but has still as far as I can see no earthly pursuit. He is apparently cheerful & in health; M^{rs}. Stuart seems also well & in spirits, but I believe no persons visit at their house. M^{rs}. Stuart some time ago had the misfortune to lose her second child; her first was not born alive,”⁶⁷ he told Wedderburn Douglas. “Poor O’Sullivan [almost certainly Michael O’Sullivan]⁶⁸ has improved most surprisingly, and except that he walks a lame he appears as well as he ever was in his life,” he told her.⁶⁹ As well, Gale mentioned “Co^l Deschambeault” probably Joseph Fleury Deschambault,⁷⁰ Dr. Robertson, possibly William Robertson who served as medical examiner in

⁶⁵ Evelyn Kolish, “STUART, Sir JAMES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stuart_james_8E.html.

⁶⁶ LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 7244, Gale to Lady Selkirk, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/631?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 12 June 2020.

⁶⁷ LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 7244, Gale to Lady Selkirk, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/631?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 12 June 2020.

⁶⁸ Alan Dever, “O’SULLIVAN, MICHAEL,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/o_sullivan_michael_7E.html.

⁶⁹ LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 7245, Gale to Lady Selkirk, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/632?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

⁷⁰ LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 7244, Gale to Lady Selkirk, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/631?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 12 June 2020; Andrew Rodger, “FLEURY DESCHAMBAULT, JOSEPH,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fleury_deschambault_joseph_4E.html.

Montreal for a time, and whose “Family⁷¹ are well and continually increasing in number & all the rest of those who were known to you, the Clarkes [probably Thomas Clarke and family]⁷², Moffatts [possibly George Moffat]⁷³, Sewells &c. &c. are in status quo.” Wrapping up his list, Gale assured Wedderburn Douglas that “The remembrances that you desire I never fail to acquaint them with; and I think I can say with truth, that absence has not diminished the interest with which they listen to any thing in which you are concerned.”⁷⁴

Not every relationship Wedderburn Douglas drew into her web was strictly speaking someone in a direct business relationship with her family or the HBC. The continuing relationship Wedderburn Douglas maintained with the prominent Loyalist and legal family, the Sewells, probably started with Jonathan Sewell⁷⁵, who had taken James Stuart under his mentorship early in his career and may have extended to the next generation and his son Stephen.⁷⁶ In his career as a justice in Quebec, Jonathan Sewell rendered a number of opinions on land claims. Because his opinions pivoted heavily on documented proof, these claims rarely favoured Indigenous claimants. Sewell’s biographers, F. Murray Greenwood and James H. Lambert note that, from

⁷¹ Possibly William Robertson, see: E. H. Bensley, “ROBERTSON, WILLIAM (1784-1844),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/robertson_william_1784_1844_7E.html.

⁷² Bruce A. Parker and Bruce G. Wilson, “CLARK, THOMAS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/clark_thomas_6E.html.

⁷³ Gerald Tulchinsky, “MOFFATT, GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/moffatt_george_9E.html.

⁷⁴ LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 7245, 1st May 1821, Gale to Lady Selkirk, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/632?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

⁷⁵ F. Murray Greenwood and James H. Lambert, “SEWELL, JONATHAN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sewell_jonathan_7E.html.

⁷⁶ F. Murray Greenwood, “SEWELL, STEPHEN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sewell_stephen_6E.html.

the end of the eighteenth century Sewell and merchant John Richardson, discussed earlier, had “established an intelligence network that would function for more than a decade with relative effectiveness.” Sewell had only recently returned to Quebec in 1816, after political issues had forced him to remove his family to England, and was still locally unpopular, when Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, at the direction of Lord Bathurst, found himself responsible for easing Sewell’s return to Quebec political society. Sewell’s health declined after his return to Quebec and may have been in a poor state even before 1821.⁷⁷ “Mr. Sewell is come back from St. Regis for a few days to visit his family. He is looking very much better for his excursion & says it has done him much good. I saw him at Mr. [Clarkes/Charles?] yesterday & he asked some questions about my news from above, he seemed most to wish to know when L.S. was at the latest date & is sure the boundary of U.C. ended,” wrote Wedderburn Douglas to Gale in 1817.⁷⁸

Wedderburn Douglas’ letters to Gale provide a small window on networks of relationship and a glimpse into the extent and durability of the imperial webs of relationship women like Wedderburn Douglas created and maintained. It may be difficult to identify with certainty the various Sewells referenced in correspondence between Gale and Wedderburn Douglas. Stephen Sewell, who died in 1832, may be one of the Sewells they discussed.⁷⁹ As mentioned, Stephen’s father Jonathan’s health had been in steady decline since before 1817.⁸⁰ But Jonathan Sewell and his wife Henrietta Smith had sixteen children, twelve of whom survived infancy, so Wedderburn Douglas’ ongoing connections with the family, connections that had continued after she had left Montreal, and after the 1821 amalgamation of the HBC and NWC had brought relative peace to

⁷⁷ F. Murray Greenwood and James H. Lambert, “SEWELL, JONATHAN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sewell_jonathan_7E.html.

⁷⁸ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, Montreal July 5th 1817 Saturday.

⁷⁹ F. Murray Greenwood, “SEWELL, STEPHEN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sewell_stephen_6E.html.

⁸⁰ F. Murray Greenwood and James H. Lambert, “SEWELL, JONATHAN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sewell_jonathan_7E.html.

the Red River Settlement and to the fur trade, were, by the 1830s, with a wide network of people. Writing from the family home, St. Mary's Isle, on the 21st of February, 1833, Wedderburn Douglas told Gale "After confessing how little I have been able to do for M^r. Sewell it is with a bad grace that I sit down to ask your benevolence to a young lady & gentleman from Perthshire."

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The purpose of her letter, Wedderburn Douglas told Gale, was to find some friends for a pair of parentless young people, Mr. and Miss Lindsay, friends of "Miss Blackburn," almost certainly a relative through Wedderburn Douglas' mother's family. "M^r. Lindsay expected to have obtained a Commission in the East India Company's Service but having been disappointed in that, his sister & he have resolved to try their fate together in Canada _ I understand that a cousin of theirs, a M^r. Stewart accompanies them to Montreal where he remains in a Mercantile house." The young people, she told Gale, "have resolved to try their fate together in Canada.... I am not personally acquainted with M^r. & Miss Lindsay but I know them to be respectably connected." The pair wanted to get information in Montreal before heading further. "I cannot ask M^{rs}. Sewell to make such an effort as to form a new acquaintance _ but perhaps her daughters will feel for a stranger, who, by the time she reaches Montreal, must stand in great need of kindness & friendly attention which they know well how to pay," wrote Wedderburn Douglas.⁸²

I have written to Miss Blackburn who asks this introduction, to advise her friends to make acquaintance with M^r. Sewell & got a few lines from him to his sisters. M^r & M^{rs} Murray of Murrayshall in Perthshire who are the friends of M^r. & Miss Lindsay & are interesting themselves particularly for Miss Lindsay will be valuable acquaintances for M^r. Sewall because they are kind friendly people with

⁸¹ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, J. Selkirk to Gale, St. Mary's Isle, 21st Feb^{ry} 1833.

⁸² McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, J. Selkirk to Gale, St. Mary's Isle, 21st Feb^{ry} 1833.

a large family some of them about his own age, & devote themselves very much to their education & happiness.⁸³

Wedderburn Douglas' letter, knitting together webs of relationships on two continents, exposes the networks of connections that families and individuals travelled along to cross oceans and continents. Mr. and Miss Lindsay, whom Wedderburn Douglas describes as "orphans," could be brought into these webs, thus facilitating their emigration, while the mutuality of the relationships she engages strengthens and maintains relationships.

In some of Wedderburn Douglas' correspondence it can be difficult to know whether the people named were part of her networks of relationships, or whether dropping their names simply massaged the relationship she had with the recipient. In November of 1818, Wedderburn Douglas wrote to Gale that "Poor David Ogden has been ill _ at first an unaccountable sort of complaint like fits in which he lost his speech. Latterly it appeared as the Epileptic fits, & he is gone to England too _ the poor babe is left with Mrs. Auldjo." This was certainly a reference to the Ogden family, whose networks of relationship through their own and the Richardson families ran to deep opposition of the HBC.⁸⁴ Wedderburn Douglas also maintained good relationships and kept abreast of the latest news from more than just Montreal's elites. In the fall of 1818 she wrote Gale saying "I hope if you can by accepting [any?] hospitality get out of the noise & confusion of Forrests at York that you will not let scruples interfere _ The Baldwins are truly kind in disposition & would be pleased I think to exercise it towards you,"⁸⁵ referring to the family of William Warren Baldwin, one of the family's lawyers in Upper Canada; Selkirk had stayed with the Baldwin family during some of the trials in York, and Wedderburn Douglas had

⁸³ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, J. Selkirk to Gale, St. Mary's Isle, 21st Feb^{ry} 1833.

⁸⁴ McCord Museum, Archives, Samuel Gale fonds (P199), "Sunday Eveng Nov^r 1st – 1818 [1st November 1818?], received at Kingston 12th Nov?]"

⁸⁵ McCord Museum, Archives, Samuel Gale fonds (P199), Montreal Thursday Sepr 15th 1818 [or possibly October]

met them when the couple visited together.⁸⁶ Wedderburn Douglas also maintained more modest social connections. In 1818 she received a letter from Sophie d’Orsonnens, wife of the des Meurons Captain Proteus d’Orsonnens who had been employed by the Selkirks’ at Lac la Pluie, thanking Lady Selkirk for a gift to her “godson,” whom the couple had named Thomas out of respect for Lord Selkirk.⁸⁷ She also kept in touch with the Berczys. William and his wife Jeanne-Charlotte were both well-known artists, but William was also involved in colonization in British North America. Charlotte may have tutored the Douglas children while they were in North America.⁸⁸

Perhaps the most significant relationship Wedderburn Douglas pursued while in Canada, her friendship with Lord and Lady Sherbrooke, is also the most illustrative of how impossibly blurry and significantly permeable the boundaries between public and private really were. In August of 1816 Wedderburn Douglas began a friendship with the Sherbrookes that survived the fur trade wars, even though Sherbrooke sometimes declined to comply with Wedderburn Douglas’ requests. The friendship between Lady Selkirk and Lady Sherbrooke in particular, survived the deaths of both of their husbands and lasted for decades after they had each returned to England. Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, a career soldier, had been appointed Governor General of Nova Scotia during the War of 1812. In April of 1816, he was appointed governor-in-chief of British

⁸⁶ Robert Macquene Baldwin and Joyce Baldwin, *The Baldwins and the Great Experiment* (London: Longmans, 1969), 104.

⁸⁷LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 5570, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c5/1068?r=0&s=1. Accessed 12 December 2020.

⁸⁸ Université de Montréal – Archives, U/10,925 (mf 5960) Montreal 12 November 1817, Lady J Selkirk to Mrs. Wm. Berczy; Ronald J. Stagg, “ALLAMAND, JEANNE-CHARLOTTE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/allamand_jeanne_charlotte_7E.html; Ronald J. Stagg, “BERCZY, WILLIAM,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/berczy_william_5E.html; Ronald J. Stagg, “ALLAMAND, JEANNE-CHARLOTTE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/allamand_jeanne_charlotte_7E.html.

North America, and he and his wife, Katherine (Katherina) Pyndar, who he had married in 1811, moved to Quebec in late June of that year. On July 12th, he began his new duties.⁸⁹ Lord Selkirk was already writing to Lord Sherbrooke by the end of July, and Lady Selkirk was writing to him directly by the middle of August. Soon after, she wrote to him again, suggesting Sherbrooke appoint justices of the peace to be sent to the Northwest, a proposal Sherbrooke politely declined citing the lateness of the season and other impediments; in the end he did send a commission, headed by William Bachelor Coltman, to inquire into the disturbances.⁹⁰ In late August, Lady Selkirk and her children boarded a steamer to Quebec City to attempt to gain an audience with the governor-in-chief of British North America.⁹¹

Believing that the Sherbrookes would be travelling by steamer to Kingston through Montreal on Monday, the 26th of August, and hoping to be able to travel back with them on that steamer, Wedderburn Douglas was dismayed on her arrival in Quebec City to find that the Sherbrookes were in fact planning to travel on the 24th. Not sure if she would be able to get passage back on the earlier boat, she nonetheless pressed on in hopes of finding a way to meet the Sherbrookes in person. As soon as she was lodged, Wedderburn Douglas sent a note to Sherbrooke asking to see him, and within a few hours he visited her. The meeting went well, she felt, but Sherbrooke still could not agree to her suggestions about sending a justice of the peace into fur trade county. Finally, the next day Lady Selkirk requested an opportunity to speak with Lady Sherbrooke. Their meeting consisted of an awkward few minutes of conversation. Downcast from the

⁸⁹ Peter Burroughs, "SHERBROOKE, Sir JOHN COAPE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 10, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sherbrooke_john_coape_6E.html.

⁹⁰ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Lord Selkirk to Lord Sherbrooke, 29 July 1816 (f 309); Lady Selkirk to Lord Sherbrooke, 21 August 1816, (f 311G - 311F); Lord Sherbrooke to Lady Selkirk, 24 August 1816 (f 311 G-H); LAC Selkirk Papers, Castle of St. Lewis, Quebec, August 19, 1816, John Sherbrooke to Lady Selkirk (f 2556); August 22, 1816, Lady Selkirk to Sherbrooke (f 2557); Castle of St. Lewis, August 24, 1816, John Sherbrooke to Lady Selkirk (f 2559). Available online from https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c3/460?r=0&s=1 and ff. Accessed 12 December 2020.

⁹¹ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 311H – 311L, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Lady Selkirk to Mr. [Andrew] Colvile, Quebec, 24 August 1816.

apparent lack of success of her mission, she was surprised when Lord and Lady Sherbrooke approached her as she was dining with her family. Taking her by the hand, the Sherbrookes announced that they had arranged to take her back to Montreal with them on the steamer.

We landed...at Montreal amidst a concourse of spectators, friends and enemies. The first tidings received by the North West of my journey, was seeing me land and walk up from the shore on the Governor's arm. This dearest Lou is a triumph quite to your tastes, is it not? Do you remember when Lord Selkirk sat down by us at a certain Assembly in London, and bowed without quitting his seat to Anna Maria, of the like nature was the discomfiture of the enemy on seeing me in such company.⁹²

From that first meeting, the relationship between Wedderburn Dougals and the Sherbrookes blossomed. On November 3rd, 1816, "F.L." (almost certainly Joseph Fleury) Deschambeault wrote to Lord Selkirk that "Her Ladyship has been in Quebec for a month, staying with the Governor General. No doubt you will receive her letters."⁹³ Wedderburn Douglas and her two children had arrived at Quebec to stay with the Sherbrookes at Government House on October 17th, 1816, and spent their visit with the Sherbrookes walking, talking, attending church, and taking carriage rides. On the 31st of October, Lady Sherbrooke noted that Wedderburn Douglas read to them in the evening. Not quite a month later, on the 9th of November, Wedderburn Douglas and her children left the Sherbrookes to return to Montreal.⁹⁴

⁹² HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 311L, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Lady Selkirk to Mr. [Andrew] Colvile, Quebec, 24 August 1816. "Lou" is almost certainly Mary Louisa Eden Colvile.

⁹³ Translated from the French by Lorraine Forbes. F De Chambaully [sic] to the Honorable The Earl of Selkirk Fort William By favour of the Hon^{ble} T Coltman. LAC, Selkirk Papers, f 2900, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c3/812?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁹⁴ LAC, MG24-A57, R2513-0-6-E, Sir John Coape Sherbrooke fonds, II Journal of Lady Sherbrooke, Vol. 10, 1816-1818.

Although their friendship did not always immediately translate into the political and legal actions Wedderburn Colville advocated for, taken as a whole, Lady Sherbrooke's journals during this period tell of a close and fond relationship between Wedderburn Douglas and both Lady Sherbrooke and Sir John Coape Sherbrooke. As January 1817 began, and Wedderburn Douglas came closer and closer to her due date, she and Lady Sherbrooke, who had kept up a regular correspondence over the fall, exchanged letters almost daily. Then on Wednesday the 8th of January, Lady Sherbrooke wrote in her journal: "I had the pleasure of hearing from Lady Selkirk, of the birth of her little girl." On the 9th, she wrote: "I had a letter from M^{rs}. Wilson with a tolerable account of Lady Selkirk." On the 10th "I heard from M^{rs}. Wilson, not so good an account of Lady Selkirk," fortunately, by the 13th she had "A good account of Lady Selkirk," and then on the 15th, Wedderburn Douglas was able to write to her herself. The Sherbrookes would become godparents to this last child of Wedderburn Douglas on February 19th, 1817.⁹⁵

Wedderburn Douglas and Lady Sherbrooke's correspondence continued over the winter and into spring, and in June, when the Sherbrookes were in Montreal, the couple and Wedderburn Douglas visited back and forth, dining, and taking carriage rides and walks together. On the 19th of June, Lady Sherbrooke wrote "after Breakfast, the Frobishers went away, and I went to Lady Selkirk we went to look at the Catholic Church. In the Evening we took a drive along the road to La Chine _ Lady Selkirk played and sang to me." By the 25th, the group of friends was looking for a summer home for Wedderburn Douglas and her family to stay in near Sorel, the summer seat of Government House.⁹⁶ "A fine morning, after breakfast we went out in search of a House for Lady Selkirk, and found a cottage close by the Gov^t House which she thought would answer very well." On July 1st, Sir John Sherbrooke "escorted Lady Selkirk as far as [Verchères?] in her way back to Montreal he took her in our Carriage, and her own waggon met her there. They set off from the house between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning, and Sir John returned here by ½ past

⁹⁵ LAC, MG24-A57, R2513-0-6-E, Sir John Coape Sherbrooke fonds, II Journal of Lady Sherbrooke, Vol. 10, 1816-1818.

⁹⁶ Now recognized as a national historic site, see: Government of Canada, Canada's Historic Places, Governors' Cottage National Historic Site of Canada, 90 chemin des Patriotes, Sorel-Tracy, Quebec, J3P, Canada, available at <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=13453>. Accessed 12 December 2020.

5, in the Evening_”⁹⁷ Wedderburn Douglas wrote twice to Samuel Gale about her summer home. On the 5th of July she told him that

I have taken a house at Sorel for the summer. An habitant has been kind enough to go out of it & leave it to me to live. It is one field off from the Govt House where I am to live during the day. The week I spent there quite revived me _ the air is so fresh & pure _ there is green turf to walk on & no spectators but the cows & chickens & cottagers as quiet as their domestic animals. The children are delighted with the thoughts of going there. They are quite well. The wee one is thriving to a wish & I have no anxiety about her at all now. We go to settle in our country quarters next week.⁹⁸

Then on July 16th, she wrote that “I have got a country house & I hope to receive you in it when you return _ It is one of the sort I like in a very pleasant situation on the Lower La Chine road opposite the upper end of the [?] Island.”⁹⁹

On July 4th Lady Sherbrooke recorded in her journal that “In the evening a servant arrived from Lady Selkirk with letters and we were occupied in answering them, which prevented our going out.” On the 8th of July, Lady Sherbrooke wrote that “Lady Selkirk, Lord Daer, and a little Boy of M^r. Clarke’s came down in the Evening.” Then, on the 10th of July, Wedderburn Douglas’ family and household arrived to stay. “About 9 o clock the Steam Boat came in from Montreal, and brought down Lady Selkirk’s Children and Servants, who took possession of a cottage near here. In the Evening we walked there and afterwards walked on the bank of the River_,” wrote Lady Sherbrooke. The families would spend the summer visiting, dining, attending church

⁹⁷ LAC, MG24-A57, R2513-0-6-E, Sir John Coape Sherbrooke fonds, II Journal of Lady Sherbrooke, Vol. 10, 1816-1818; Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Anglican Christ Church Cathedral, Actes. *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

⁹⁸ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, Montreal July 5th 1817 Saturday.

⁹⁹ McCord Museum, Archives, Samuel Gale fonds (P199), [Lady Selkirk to Gale] Thursday July 16 [1818] [received in August]

services and taking rides and walks together. During this time, Wedderburn Douglas spent time with Sir John Coape Sherbrooke alone as well as in the company of Lady Sherbrooke. The summer ended on the 22nd of September 1817: “Lady Selkirk and the Children left us at 7 o’clock in the morning to go on board the [Melcham] for Montreal.”¹⁰⁰

The tables of social connection with the Governor would change after Sherbrooke was forced to resign due to ill health, and was replaced with the Duke of Richmond, who publicly dined with the Northwesters. “The Duke of Richmond made his debut by going to Upper Canada in their canoes *selon les regales*, and on returning went to dine with W. Mac[G] [William McGillivray] at his house,” she wrote to her sister-in-law Katherine Halkett. “This was followed by a public dinner, at which Mr. Mac G. presided, and about 12 o’clock when the Duke retired to his room, he sent for the President to finish the night drinking brandy and water and smoking cigars.”¹⁰¹ Even had Wedderburn Douglas been welcome at this public dinner, the small corners of homosocial intimacy some of the group adjourned to, such as private rooms where brandy and water was consumed and cigars were smoked, would have been out of reach to her, a reminder that, even to Wedderburn Douglas, access to certain areas of relationship was still bounded. Even if she could converse with the Sherbrookes during intimate walks and carriage rides, late nights drinking and smoking in gentlemen’s private rooms were definitely out of bounds to her.

Wedderburn Douglas’ relationship with the Sherbrookes, however, would endure. Even after the Sherbrookes left for England their friendship bridged the boundaries of the personal and the public. From Montreal on February 13th, 1818, Wedderburn Douglas wrote her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colville, telling him “Now I must tell you that we have been in the *dismals* and in great terror from a severe illness of Sir John Sherbrooke.” Sherbrooke had experienced paralysis, she said, although his speech and mind were not affected. “Poor Lady Sherbrooke was in dreadful alarm, in fact she gave up all hope I believe,” for about five days. Lady Sherbrooke must have written to Wedderburn Douglas only a day or so after her husband was struck ill. “It

¹⁰⁰ Library and Archives Canada, II Journal of Lady Sherbrooke, Vol. 10, 1816-1818, Sir John Coape Sherbrooke fonds, MG24-A57, R2513-0-6-E.

¹⁰¹ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes,” extract J.[ean] S.[elkirk] to Kate, Oct. 26, 1818.

has really haunted me night and day,” she told her brother, until she had heard a better report later that day.¹⁰² The Sherbrookes left for England in August of that year.¹⁰³

“I have laid my hands by accident on Lady Sherbrooke’s letters respecting Coltman’s report,” Wedderburn Douglas wrote to her husband in 1819. After telling her brother she had copied pertinent extracts from the correspondence, she added “I don’t know if this can be of any use to you now, but I copied it before committing the letters to the flames.”¹⁰⁴ John Coape Sherbrooke died in February of 1830,¹⁰⁵ but the friendship between Wedderburn Douglas, who had become a widow herself in 1820¹⁰⁶ continued into both women’s later years, as evidenced by the paintings “Poultry show at Townhead school. The Countess of Selkirk, Lady Sherbrooke, General Irving and Jemima Wedderburn standing. . . .” and “At Lynmouth the donkey boys brought the big donkey for Lady Sherbrooke, and the small one for Jemima Wedderburn. . . .” both rendered in 1844 by Wedderburn Douglas’ niece, Jemima Wedderburn Blackburn.¹⁰⁷ Figure 4 below is a relationship map showing some of Wedderburn Douglas’ family relationships, as well as some of the relationships she developed while in Montreal, along with known connections to the fur trade, the West Indies, and the Jacobite Risings, which will be discussed later. Katherine Pyndar

¹⁰² HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 740-741, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Lady Selkirk to Mr. Colvile, Montreal, Feb. 13th, 1818.

¹⁰³ Peter Burroughs, “SHERBROOKE, Sir JOHN COAPE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 12, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sherbrooke_john_coape_6E.html.

¹⁰⁴ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 893A, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection Lady Selkirk to Lord Selkirk.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Burroughs, “SHERBROOKE, Sir JOHN COAPE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sherbrooke_john_coape_6E.html.

¹⁰⁶ John Morgan Gray, “DOUGLAS, THOMAS, Baron DAER and SHORTCLEUCH, 5th Earl of SELKIRK,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/douglas_thomas_5E.html.

¹⁰⁷ National Galleries of Scotland, D 5359.100, Jemima Blackburn, dated 5th Oct. 1844. Available at <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/40860/poultry-show-townhead-school-countess-selkirk-lady-sherbrooke-general-irving-and-jemima-wedderburn>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

Sherbrooke, Lady Sherbrooke died on the 15th of May 1856.¹⁰⁸ Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk died on the 10th of June 1871, at the age of 85.¹⁰⁹ Her death notice in the *Illustrated London News* consisted of an accounting of her family webs of relationship. “Her Ladyship was only daughter of James Wedderburn-Colvile, Esq. of Invernesk (third son of Sir John Wedderburn, fifth Baronet, of Balindean, executed at Kensington-common, after the Battle of Culloden)” the piece read. She was also “descended through her mother, from the family of the Lords Colvile of Ochiltree,” it continued, finally concluding with her marriage to “Thomas, fifth Earl of Selkirk,” and his death in 1820, before concluding with the names and marriages of her children.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *The Midland Antiquary*, vol. 3-4, (Birmingham, 1884), 74.

¹⁰⁹ National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers of Death, 871/32, 1871, Deaths in the District of Kirkcudbright, 1871, page 11, number 32.

¹¹⁰ *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 58 (January to July 1871), 619.

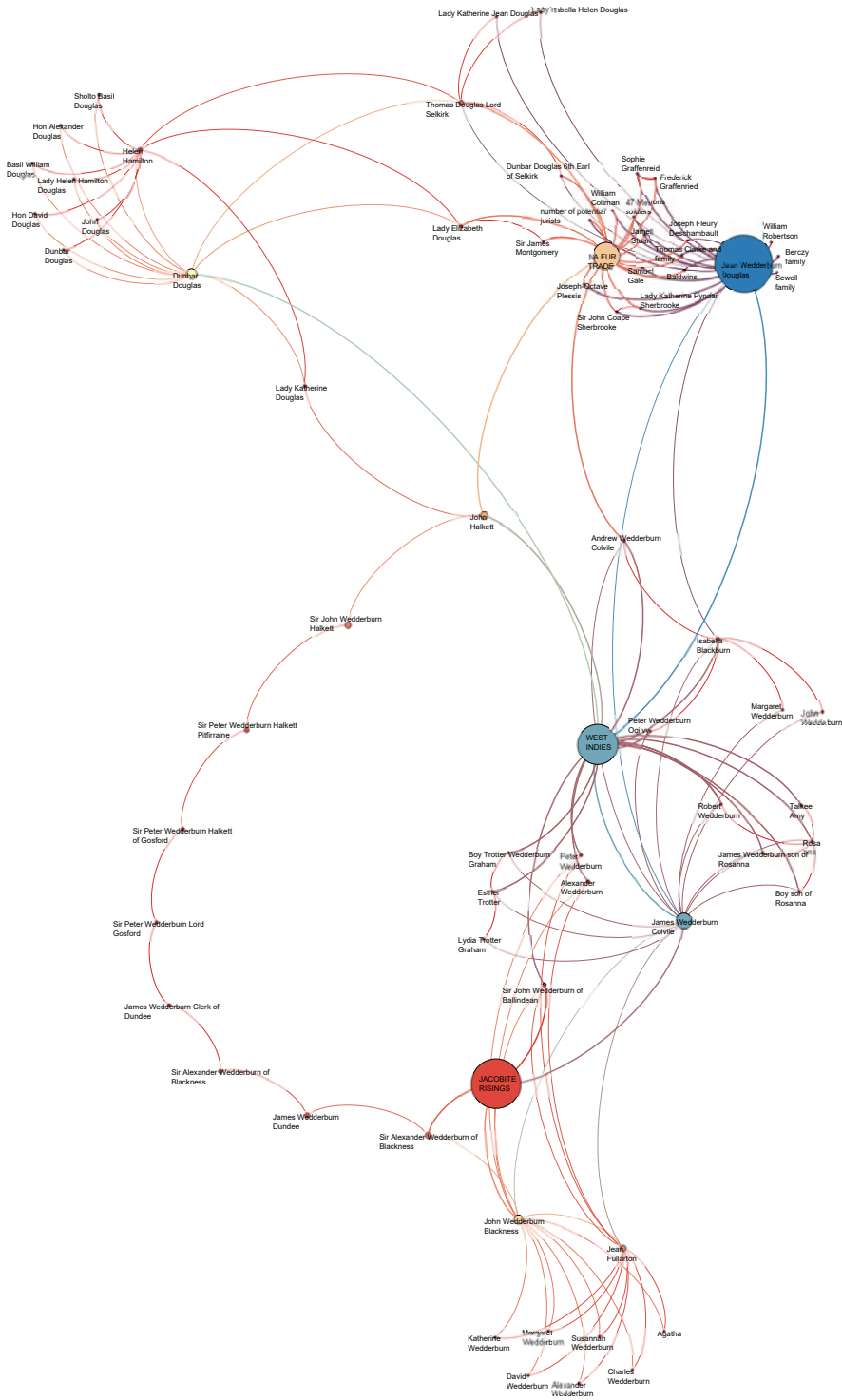


Figure 4: Jean Wedderburn Douglas Relationship Map

Conclusions

Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk's life exemplifies not only the importance of relationships in the inseparably allied pursuits of family and fortune, but the ways in which the brokering and management of relationships, relationships that transcended the public and the private, offered a space where women could participate in the financial and political life of their families and communities. In doing this, they also participated in the violences that these might involve. Within these spider's webs of networks women did real work, and derived real benefits, making these networks themselves a sort of archive of women's lives. What correspondence has survived reveals Jean Wedderburn Douglas to have been a strong, independent, and self-reflective woman of intelligence, insight, and skill, but also one who felt the tension between what Barbara Taylor has described as "a trend whereby men and women, especially those in the middle ranks, were in fact becoming more like each other in social attitudes and behavior, in educational and professional aspirations, in conversational codes, even in their reading matter, at least in the emerging enlightened middle class" at the end of the long eighteenth century.¹¹¹ While Taylor's research is focused in the middle class, this was a trend significant enough, and may have been occurring more generally, that it was eliciting a reaction, a profound discomfort with this permeability of the boundaries of gender roles in late eighteenth-century Britain. While this discomfort does not seem to have immediately and irrevocably define the lives of elite women like Jean Wedderburn Douglas, when and how these changes impacted women was also informed by social rank, it did inform and complicate them. In this context, Henry Taylor's response to the famous dissenting writer Ann Torkington Jebb, "you confess yourself neither fish nor flesh, but a kind of otter, between a fine lady and a philosopher,"¹¹² has a familiar ring. Writing to her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile in 1817, Wedderburn Douglas spoke of the ambivalence she was feeling about the role she was playing working in Montreal as her husband, Lord Selkirk, pursued his business and colonization goals and his opposition to the NWC by travelling overland. While Lord Selkirk engaged directly in physical conflict this colonial expansion engendered, Wedderburn Douglas deliberately and intentionally contributed to the

¹¹¹ Barbara Taylor, "Feminists Versus Gallants: Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain." *Representations* 87, no. 1 (2004): 136.

¹¹² Anthony Page, "'A Great Politicianess': Ann Jebb, Rational Dissent and politics in late eighteenth-century Britain." *Women's History Review*, 17:5, 743-765, 754.

project. In Montreal she reflected that “This is an exercise of patience that I am well used to now-a-days, but I always wish I could take my hat and staff and walk forth, the petticoats have been a sore hindrance to me for these 18 months now. Yet I am dreadfully sick of wearing the other apparel, which you must acknowledge however I only put on in my husbands absence.”¹¹³ On the first of November 1818, in a letter to Samuel Gale, Wedderburn Douglas shared her concerns about a memorial Lord Selkirk was writing. “We are rather in despair at the great length of the [mem^l] & I think it might be shortened if any one had time or courage. I have courage _ I would make time _ but I want capacity,” she wrote.¹¹⁴

At the same time, social convention could sometimes work in Wedderburn Douglas’ favour, something she was keenly sensitive to. Aware of the gendered constraints on women of her social class, Wedderburn Douglas could also engage in microaggressions displayed as an arch sense of humour when discussing her negotiation of social convention.

...even poor me comes in for a share of the thrashing. This attack proved a bad speculation, for it enraged many who were not taking much heed to the rest of the abuse... It was really very unmerited for all I had done was as much behind the curtain and as meekly as possible, and I have been as civil to all the ladies of the place as I could be, ever since I came,”¹¹⁵

she wrote to her brother-in-law John Wedderburn Halkett in 1817, reflecting on the effects of an article placed in the newspaper by “Mercator,” a nom de plume for Edward Ellice. During the worst of the fur trade wars, volleys of propagandist publications, appearing in newspapers and as separate pamphlets, were lobbed by both sides. Along with letter writing, these publications

¹¹³ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, 682, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, 21 December 1817, Lady Selkirk to Mr. [Andrew] Colvile.

¹¹⁴ McCord Museum, Archives, Samuel Gale fonds (P199), Nov^r1st – 1818, [2987] [1st November 1818?, received at Kingston 12th Nov?]

¹¹⁵AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes, extract, “J.[ean]S.[elkirk] to Halkett,” Montreal, February 20, 1817.

operated as a way to extend networks of relationship on both sides, as well as to reinforce and support existing parts of these networks.

It is possible that Wedderburn Douglas was alluding to a “Mercator” letter published in the *Montreal Herald*, and then later a pamphlet. In the letter, dated 15 November 1816, “Mercator,” who it is generally agreed was in fact Edward Ellice, wrote that “The systematic arts and misrepresentations used, and pains taken to deceive others by his Lordship, and his advocates, his dupes and minions,” were beyond the pale in “a *British country*,” resembling more the “*French Revolution*.” Lord Selkirk and his supporters had been approaching “the clergy, the nuns, and almost every person supposed to possess influence,” who, if they chose, might have been able to “prejudice the minds of the ignorant multitude,” who had been “assailed by artful tales,” the author went on. Indeed, “to such a pitch has this been carried, that even tavern keepers, grog sellers, and pedlars, male and female, have been applied to,” the letter continued, “by one or other high in his lordship’s confidence, or zealous in his cause, the name of some of whom, would astonish the world.”¹¹⁶

In Wedderburn Douglas’ world, the breach of social norms could come under frank censure that could be used to police the boundaries of networks. In May of 1817, as everyone anticipated the forthcoming trials relating to the violence and deaths associated with the fur trade in the North West, the socialite wife of NWC partner John McTavish Emily Caton, foreseeing the impending selection of juries, wrote to her uncle that

22 May 1817: The Selkirk party look [very] down cast here, Lady Selkirk is quite ill in consequence of the late news – and has sent off one of her Lawyers to his Lordship, I suppose to implore him not to resist the authority of government, one step more and his life will be forfeited. I would pity her from my soul if she had not acted with such a want of delicacy – Only think of a Lady of her [Rank?], having private meetings (at the House of a grocer in the old Marketplace with all

¹¹⁶ *The communications of Mercator, upon the contest between the Earl of Selkirk, and the Hudson's Bay Company, on one side, and the North West Company on the other* (Montreal, Lower Canada: Printed by W. Gray, 1817), 74.

those she can get to join her party, drinking tea with the Grocer family & securing the various reports that any town shop keeper might wish to give her, she in her turn condescending to tell them the most ridiculous falsehoods which these ignorant people religiously believe, her object is to influence the party, which in this country are composed of that class of people – but the [?] not take place here, which is greatly in favor of the NW Gentleman, but that is entre nous I assure you what I tell you of Lady Selkirk is no idle report, but literally true - ¹¹⁷

For her part, Wedderburn Douglas could give as well as take social censure. In her biography of William McGillivray, *Lord of the Northwest*, Marjorie Wilkins Campbell wrote that, while in Montreal, Wedderburn Douglas' vented some of her frustrations by making "cutting references to Miss [Mary] McGillivray's claims to be recognized as 'the first lady in Montreal.'" ¹¹⁸

Wedderburn Douglas was not stopped by gossip, and her own correspondence shows that she could use gossip to trim and police the boundaries of her networks, too. A lot of the frank gossip in the correspondence between Wedderburn Douglas and Gale was about NWC officials and their related business associates. "Mr. McGill Desrevieres went down in the Frontenac Steam boat last trip. I daresay he thinks himself very clever in having got rid of his fair cousin so [?] but it was at the expense of several stories about going to Buffaloe," she wrote to Gale in October of 1818. ¹¹⁹ James McGill Desrivieres was the son of Thomas Hippolyte Desrivieres, step son of James McGill, for whom McGill made special provision in his will. ¹²⁰ Desrivieres married Caroline Frobisher, daughter of the deceased fur trader Joseph Frobisher on the 17th of January,

¹¹⁷ Maryland Historical Society, Harper-Pennington Papers, 1701-1899, Robert Goodloe Harper Family Papers, MS 431, Roll No. 3, Emily Caton McTavish to Robert Goodloe Harper.

¹¹⁸ Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1962), 246.

¹¹⁹ McCord Museum, Archives, Samuel Gale fonds (P199), J. Selkirk to Samuel Gale, Kingston Friday Octr 9th 1818

¹²⁰ Stanley Brice Frost, *McGill University: For the Advancement of Learning*, vol I, 1801-1895 (Montreal: McGill -Queen's University Press, 1980), 17.

1820, at the Basilique Notre-Dame in Montreal. ¹²¹ As already discussed, this extended family had long and deep connections with the “Pedlars from Montreal.”

By any standard, Wedderburn Douglas was a remarkable woman. In a letter to Lord Selkirk sent in November of 1816, “FL” Deschambault, almost certainly Joseph Fleury Deschambault,¹²² wrote that he had been holding off sending any letters until it was safe to do so without fear of interception and that “Ce moment heureux est donc arrivés, et nous le devons à la Conduite, de Milady, qui dans toutes ces circonstances malheureuse a montre une Sagacité pénétration, et prudence audessus de son Sexe_ aucune occasion n’a été perdu par elle.” It is difficult to judge how typical Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk’s experiences were, and how much “beyond her sex” she really operated. ¹²³ It is likely that, even among her contemporaries, she was unusually well suited to the work she did while in Quebec. Sévère Dumoulin described Wedderburn Douglas to Bishop Plessis in a letter in May of 1818 stating that he had “never seen a lady so intelligent, spiritual, and prepossessing as Lady Selkirk. She has done her utmost to secure for us everything that we need, and always so charmingly that she has increased by half the value of all her assistance. Milord seems unable to do anything without consulting her, and I believe in some respects she is able to understand things better even than His Lordship.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Marriage: Caroline Frobisher, Basilique Notre dame, 1820. Institut Généalogique Drouin; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

¹²² Gale to Lady Selkirk, LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7244, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/631?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 13 December 2020; Andrew Rodger, “FLEURY DESCHAMBAULT, JOSEPH,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 11, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fleury_deschambault_joseph_4E.html.

¹²³ Translated from the French by Lorraine Forbes. F De Chambaulty [sic] to the Honorable The Earl of Selkirk Fort William By favour of the Hon^{ble} T Coltman. LAC Selkirk Papers, f 2900, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c3/812?r=0&s=4. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

¹²⁴ Nive Voisine, “DUMOULIN, SÉVÈRE (1793-1853),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 14, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dumoulin_severe_1793_1853_8E.html; Dumoulin to Bishop

On the other hand, it is difficult to judge how many other women, when they found themselves in similar circumstances, were just as present, just as capable, and just as respected by their families as Wedderburn Douglas. Wedderburn Douglas' remark that the Sherbrookes were "like other people" in that they read and criticized each other's correspondence suggests that, at least in her circles, marriages could involve a certain amount of mutuality.

What is clear is that Wedderburn Douglas' world was one in which the webs of networks of family and business intersected and overlapped, connecting continents and people, crossing oceans and supporting the financial and material, as well as the ideological work of the British Empire. The creation and management of these networks could be gendered but was not strictly or only a male or a female purview. Nor were these networks strictly public or private. Resisting clear binaries, in the skilled hands of someone like Wedderburn Douglas, these webs of relationships could facilitate the imperial project and the aspirations of families and businesses caught up in that project as they moved along these networks of relationship. But if they could be used to construct, they were also the webs along which impulses of violence could travel. Wedderburn's interventions, both in her frank directions, and in her creation, expansion, and maintenance of relationships, were consistently involved in supporting and maintaining one side in the ongoing fur trade violence that erupted at Red River after the establishment of the Red River or Selkirk Settlement. This violence, in turn, was an extension of wider fur trade violence, the fur trade wars, that traveled through the fur trade at the end of the long eighteenth century and would continue until the merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821. These wars themselves were in part the result of the business instability that European wars had created. Far from being a distanced helpmeet, Wedderburn Douglas was an agent, a participant in this cascading violence even if her feet never touched Red River soil.

Plessis, May 19, 1818 in Grace Lee Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions 1815-1827* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1942), 104-106

Chapter Six: “An appearance of regularity and civilization”¹: The Red River Settlement

The importance of the spider’s webs of relationships that supported Wedderburn Douglas’ family and its business undertakings did not end when she and her children left Montreal. Nor did the family’s interventions in the fur trade and the Red River settlement. In the early 1820s, and especially after the merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821, the overt violence that had characterized the previous decade began to wind down.² At the same time, Lord Selkirk died in April of 1820, leaving a tight group of family members as his executors. In this atmosphere of relative, if not absolute calm, the Selkirk executors began to explore how they could “regularize” the colony. Not surprisingly, their solutions combined business and networks of family and social relationships that could include kin and business partners, and which were connected through mutual interests and a certain degree of trust, control, or both. These solutions were also frequently marked by symbolic violence.

Early attempts at Civilization and Regularization in the Red River Settlement: The Buffalo Wool Company, Race, Class and Gender

One of the earliest attempts at “regularization” of the colony was the creation of the Buffalo Wool Company (BWC), which, it was hoped, would provide ways that the settlement and settlers could be more self-sufficient. The creation and support of the BWC occurred in the context of the creation and maintenance of networks of relationships. One of the relationships the Wedderburns and Douglasses added to their network at about this time was both tenuous and fragile. The director of the BWC, John Pritchard had served the HBC well during the troubles, and had gained some small degree of inclusion as a result. Others, including Jean Wedderburn Douglas’ support of the undertaking, connected by both family and business to the enterprise,

¹ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes,” extract, J.[ean]S.[Selkirk] to Kate, Montreal, March 27, 1816.

² Some historians have traced this violence and rivalry as far back as 1804, but Ann Carlos argues for a date of approximately 1810. Ann Carlos, "The Causes and Origins of the North American Fur Trade Rivalry: 1804-1810." *The Journal of Economic History* 41, no. 4 (1981): 777-94. Accessed November 17, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2120645>.

were more durable. Another example of relationships examined in this chapter is that of George Simpson and his relationship to the Wedderburn family. Simpson's ability to maintain his connection with them, and especially with Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, was key to the power he held during his tenure with the HBC. That these relationships were not purely business ones highlights how permeable the boundaries between the business and the personal could really be. In ways that were mutually constitutive, these relationships facilitated Simpson's racialized construction of people, labour, and geography, a racialization that was, in turn, legible to a family with deep roots in West Indian plantation slavery.

The story of the BWC is one connected by relationships that reach back into the fur trade wars. Lord Selkirk departed North America for England in early November of 1818, while Wedderburn Douglas and their young family remained in Montreal. Although her letters continued to display optimism that his health could improve, privately Wedderburn Douglas already suspected the truth about how seriously ill her partner was. It was not until after his death, however, that she confessed this to her sister-in-law, Lady Katherine Douglas Halkett. "I have so long felt that this calamity was to befall us, almost before he left Canada," she wrote, still taking in the fact of his death. "At least I had a vague dread and I can hardly say that this is worse than when he left me there."³ Following Lord Selkirk's departure from North America, Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk stayed behind and continued to work as his partner from her base in Montreal.⁴

In early January 1819, Bishop Plessis wrote to Joseph-Alfred-Norbert Provencher at Red River. Opening his letter with "Lady Selkirk (dont le mari es test parti pour l'Europe au mois d'octobre, apparemment dans l'intention de revenir) ayant eu l'attention de m'informer que le 10 du courant il partoit un courier pour le Fort Douglass," Plessis added toward the end "son [Lord Selkirk's] voyage qui a surprise beacoup de monde. On le croyoit allè dans le Haut Canada, et il étoit à

³ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, "Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes J.[ean] S.[elkirk] to K.[Lady Katherine Halkett] Pau, April 17th 1820.

⁴ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 399

New York rendu pour s'embarquer.”⁵ His health failing, and the trials in North America going poorly, Lord Selkirk may have had little choice but to return to Britain, while the strategy of leaving Wedderburn Douglas and his family behind to give weight to the idea that he would return seems to have worked. In Selkirk's absence the Canadian trials continued, and other business, including the establishment of a Catholic mission at Red River also demanded Wedderburn Douglas' attention.

It was not until the next spring that Wedderburn Douglas and her young family left North America for England. Arriving in New York on May 7, 1819, Wedderburn Douglas, her children and servants set sail in the packet ship the *James Munroe*, on Monday, May 10th bound for Liverpool. There they landed on Saturday, June 5th. The next day they headed to London.⁶ The Hudson's Bay Company's agents in Montreal, Maitland, Gardner, & Auldjo, arranged the shipping of the family's remaining possessions to Wedderburn Douglas' brother's Langley Farm estate toward the end of June. Writing to Wedderburn Douglas, partner George Garden reported on family matters, including his child's teething, before adding that “Your Baggage goes by the Vessel that takes this & I hope will be received in good order for the Piano – I got a Tin Case from the Miss Ermatingers _ which fitted exactly & for the Harp I took the tin lining out of the old Case & put into the Cherry one which will completely preserve them from all damp.” Garden also included all of the correspondence that had been piling up since Wedderburn Douglas and her family had left in his shipment.⁷

⁵ Plessis to Provencher Quebec, 6 January 1819, in Nute, *Documents Relating to Northwest Missions*, 180- 182; Kenneth Landry, “PROVENCHER, JOSEPH-ALFRED-NORBERT (baptized Joseph-Albert),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 15, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/provencher_joseph_alfred_norbert_11E.html.

⁶ *Lancaster Intelligencer* (Lancaster, P.A.), 11 May 1819, 3; *The Long-Island Star* (Brooklyn, NY), 12 May 1819, 3; *The Long-Island Star*, 28 July 1819, 2.

⁷ LAC Selkirk Papers, 21 June 1819 George Garden to Lady Selkirk (f6285); 30 June, 1819 Maitland, Garden, & Auldjo to A. Colvile (f 6283), available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c6/682?r=0&s=3 and ff. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

Despite her private fears, in a letter to Samuel Gale at the end of June, Wedderburn Douglas recounted that she had been anxious about Lord Selkirk's health when she first saw him on her return, but now, she wrote, she felt that all that was needed was rest and a break from the strain the previous years had put on him. "A warmer climate next winter is indispensable & to the South of Europe we must go," she wrote. Updating Gale on her family, she added that "The children are quite well. Babe knew papa it was very touching in our meeting. Isalen looks better I think for the change remember [us] to Mr. & Mrs. Stuart to O'Sullivan & all friends. I shall write to Dechambeault if I can get a less expensive conveyance."⁸ Balancing her role as mother and networker with her concerns about business, a significant part of Wedderburn Douglas' letter to Gale was taken up with the political happenings and repercussions from the fur trade wars as they were playing out in Britain. Her brother-in-law, Sir James Montgomery, had recently presented a petition to parliament asking for government assistance for the Red River colony. Montgomery used the petition, composed by sometimes fur trader and recent Red River colonist John Pritchard, to table papers relating to their case and the government's handling of it in parliament. The effect of Pritchard's petition, the parliamentary papers, and Montgomery's speech seemed to be gaining them political ground.⁹ Wedderburn Douglas told Gale that "At the moment of my arrival I found a Petition from Pritchard had been presented to the H. of C by Sir James Montgomery. Some very fortunate delays occurred & gave it time to be circulated & the effect has been better than I expected. As Halkett observed 'the Petticoats & their [Saints] are set in motion.'"¹⁰

In addition to his interventions in the fur trade wars on the HBC and Red River Settlement's behalf, Pritchard spent some of his time in England laying the groundwork for a new joint stock venture at Red River, the Buffalo Wool Company. John Pritchard was born in Shropshire,

⁸ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, Jaen Selkirk to Samuel Gale, Barnes-Surrey, June 28th 1819.

⁹ J.M. Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars: The Founding of Western Canada* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publishers, 1999), 255.

¹⁰ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, Jaen Selkirk to Samuel Gale, Barnes-Surrey, June 28th 1819.

England, coming to North America in 1800. From 1801 to 1804, he worked as a clerk for Forsyth, Richardson, and Company and then for the XY or “New North West Company.” When the New North West Company and the North West Company merged in 1804 Pritchard was retained and continued to work for that Company until 1814. That year Pritchard’s La Souris Fort was attacked by men acting under orders from Miles Macdonell. Feeling he had failed to offer adequate resistance to the attack and subsequent seizure of pemmican from his post, his superiors labelled him a coward, and Pritchard left the NWC’s service. Planning to eventually settle at Red River, Pritchard went first to Montreal where he found a willing ear in Colin Robertson, another former NWC employee, whom he asked for assistance to travel either to Red River or London to warn the settlers and colonial officials of an imminent attack planned by the NWC. In the end, Pritchard made his way back by snowshoes to Red River. By the time he had arrived in the settlement in April 1815, Lord Selkirk had appointed him to the Council of Assiniboia. From there, Pritchard was present at the settlement to witness the NWC arrest the colony’s governor, Miles Macdonell, and see the settlers scattered, some choosing to travel east with the NWC, while a few sought safety at Jack River. Eventually, Pritchard and Robertson were able to escort the settlers who had fled to Jack River back.¹¹

The following year the colony saw the events of Seven Oaks unfold. In the aftermath, Pritchard was taken prisoner by the NWC and transported to Fort William where he was held until Lord Selkirk and his group arrived. On his way back to the settlement, after having presented Selkirk with a petition from the Red River Settlers asking for protection from the NWC, Pritchard was threatened by two NWC men and decided to return to Montreal. There he was a witness at several trials relating to fur trade violence in the west. From Montreal he travelled to London, arriving in May of 1819. In June, Pritchard’s petition was presented to parliament, and that same year his account of the events at Red River was published as part of a pamphlet along with accounts by Frederick Damien Heurter and Pierre-Chrysologue Pambrum. Pritchard’s

¹¹ Carol M. Judd, “PRITCHARD, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 15, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pritchard_john_8E.html; W. Stewart Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 493.

biographer, Carol M. Judd, also notes that during his trip to London, he “laid the groundwork with the governor and London committee of the HBC for the Buffalo Wool Company.”¹²

As Lord Selkirk’s health continued to decline, Wedderburn Douglas set out from her brother’s home, Langley Farm, with her ailing husband and two daughters on the 11th of September 1819, bound to find a warmer climate in which her husband might recuperate. The family travelled to Paris, then Bordeaux, arriving there in October. From Bordeaux they travelled to Pau, arriving on the 22nd of October 1819. A letter Wedderburn Douglas wrote to Samuel Gale while travelling contained a fairly extensive rehashing of the political and legal issues that could not have been far from the family’s minds, then finally closed with a brief accounting of her children. They had left their son “Dau” [Lord Daer] at Andrew Wedderburn Colvile’s estate, Langley Farm, to be taken to school to continue his education toward manhood, she wrote. “I have only heard of his being left there. It was quite necessary that he should not continue the desultory travelling life where he might certainly have learned much but with too little application on his own part. He had learned to ride & was grown more manly since he had his cousins to play with. I miss him most grievously _ much more I believe & trust than he does me,” she told Gale. “Isalen,” probably Isobel, was well and “causes no anxiety except from the too tender conscience as you remember.” Wedderburn Douglas had found someone “not quite a Governess,” to take charge of Isalen. “The little one is every day more amusing,” she wrote, closing with “this is a letter of gossip & not business as you perceive so farewell.”¹³ In Pau, Lord Selkirk’s health continued to decline, and he passed away on the 8th of April 1820, never having returned to England.¹⁴

The BWC has often been dismissed by historians as a foolish, short-lived venture, but it was also an important harbinger of things to come at the fledgling Red River Settlement. The idea behind

¹² Carol M. Judd, “PRITCHARD, JOHN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 15, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pritchard_john_8E.html; W. Stewart Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934),493.

¹³ McGill University, Rare Books and Special Collections, CA RBD MSG 400, Samuel Gale Fonds, Lady Selkirk to Samuel Gale Bordeaux Oct 17th 1819.

¹⁴ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 428.

the BWC was to purchase buffalo robes from the HBC, separate the hair and downy undercoat from the hides, process the hides into leather, and further separate the hair and undercoat into various grists to make a range of products from rope, through mattress stuffing and coarse blanketing locally. The best “wool” would be sent to the London market to be auctioned.¹⁵ In a 1923 article in the *Manitoba Free Press*, Samuel Pritchard Matheson, a grandson of the Company’s head John Pritchard, recalled finding some of the remnants of the Buffalo Wool Company in the family attic as a child. The equipment included hide scrapers and other tools imported from England, as well as graded wool. The attic also contained oak hat forms and stretchers, also imported from England, and a sample top hat that had been made in Britain and sent to the Colony, and which was, noted Matheson, the hat remarked on in William Keating’s report on the American Long Expedition.¹⁶

The operation was what would today be referred to as a venture project. As Arthur Silver Morton noted in *Under western skies: Being a series of pen-pictures of the Canadian West in early fur trade times*, at the time, British cloth manufacturing was undergoing a period of mechanization that increased the demand for wool, and especially fine and expensive merino wool. Colonies like Australia had begun importing merino sheep, and Lord Selkirk had made an early but ill-fated attempt to establish them at Red River.¹⁷ One of the uses for fine fibres such as merino wool was in the manufacture of essentially knock-off “cashmere” shawls. Cashmere shawls had become popular in the late eighteenth century. With their rich colours and patterns they set off and were set off by the thin, often white, neoclassical gowns that referenced older forms of empire, and that had become popular in the period, while also offering some protection from the cold that thin muslin could not provide. Handmade from what we would call today pashmina, the

¹⁵ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7300, Pritchard to Colvile 1821 June 9th Red River, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

¹⁶ “Article in Free Press Wakes Primate’s Memories,” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 25, 1923, 9.

¹⁷ Arthur S. Morton *Under Western Skies, Being a Series of Pen-Pictures of the Canadian West in Early Fur Trade Times* (Toronto: T. Nelson & Sons, Limited, 1937), 14 ff.

shawls were so expensive that they were the purview of only the wealthy. Coming from the east, they also represented a form of consuming empire.¹⁸

The popularity of the soft, warm shawls soon prompted British manufacturers to try their hand at imitation, and to this end a great deal of energy and investment was expended. By the 1780s, manufacturers in Norwich experimented with needleworked woolen versions; soon after Edinburgh weavers were working on fully loom-worked pieces, and by the early 1800s, both Norwich and Edinburgh manufacturers had developed harness-loom-woven versions. Paisley weavers, who developed a shuttle device that allowed them to weave close copies of the fashionable shawls, employed agents in London to trace the latest designs as they came off the boat. But despite all of these efforts, the hand of the British shawls was still inferior to the real thing. Unable to import an adequate supply of goat-fleece, its limited supply was almost entirely taken up by Kashmiri weavers, British shawl manufacturers attempted to introduce the goats to Britain. A few goats were imported in the late 1700s, then in 1812 William Moorcroft attempted to bring in fifty shawl-goats. His efforts were largely a failure, the goats had been segregated by sex onto two boats, and the boat carrying the females sank. The males did not fare much better, only four poor and sick animals made it to Blair, Scotland. Within a few months they had died as well. At the same time, the French were also attempting to import and breed the goats. They, too, encountered issues as the goats did not seem to travel well, and contracted diseases even if they survived the trip. Both French and British importers found the goats produced very little fleece per animal. In 1828 one flock in Britain had reached twenty-seven animals, enough to make three shawls. Woven in Paisley, one of these shawls took a Gold Medal from the Society of Arts.¹⁹ The enormous demand for cashmere shawls in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

¹⁸ Kristina Molin Cherneski, "‘Likely to Continue as Fashionable as Ever’: Kashmiri Shawls, Luxury, and the British Empire," *Shift* (Graduate Journal of Visual and Material Culture) Issue 11, "Blood and Earth and Soil," available at <https://shiftjournal.org/seam/shawls/>. Accessed on 16 December 2020; E. Claire Cage, "The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797-1804." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 193-215. Accessed November 16, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40264250>; M. Maskiell, *Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000*. *Journal of World History* 13(1), 27-65. doi:10.1353/jwh.2002.0019.

¹⁹ John Irwin, *The Kashmir Shawl* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1973), 19-24.

centuries drove a range of innovations in manufacturing, not all of which were ultimately successful, while difficulties in obtaining enough goat fibre to fashion finer grades of fabric could have meant a ready market for bison down, had the soft fleece proven amenable to dyes. In this context, the BWC was not an entirely whimsical venture.

Cashmere shawls were also popular in the Northern North American fur trade. As Sherry Farrell Racette has noted, these shawls were, for many years, sought-after fur trade items. “Most First Nation and Métis women across Canada wore fine paisley and, later, tartan shawls,” writes Farrell Racette, noting that they “provided protection from the elements and also served as an expressive garment.” The shawls, which had gradually replaced beautifully dressed hide robes for many Indigenous women in Northern North America, first imported from India, and later from British manufacturers, could be worn in a variety of ways, while their floral designs introduced and inspired new Indigenous design practices.²⁰ An example of one of these shawls can be seen worn by one of the women in Peter Rindisbacher’s painting, *A half-cast [Métis] and his two wives*.²¹ Had the Buffalo Wool Company proven successful, the HBC might have not only realized a new market for the bison hides they collected, but may have been able to market fine buffalo wool shawls to their fur trade customers, while the capital for the project was provided by private investors. But while the idea that the fine undercoat of bison might provide an alternate source of fine, and therefore potentially valuable fibre was not outlandish, it was, as all venture projects, speculative and risky.²² Other aspects of the Buffalo Wool Company’s

²⁰ Sherry Farrell Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade: The Indigenization of European Trade Goods in Historic and Contemporary Canada." *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, no. 20 (2008): 69-81. Accessed December 9, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40793871>, 76; Sherry Farrell Racette, "Traditional Arts and Media: Resilience and Survivance," in *Clearing a Path: New Ways of Seeing Traditional Indigenous Art*, Carmen Robertson and Sherry Farrell-Racette, eds. (Canadian Plains Research Centre 2009), 26.

²¹ LAC, "A halfcast [Métis] and his two wives," MIKAN number 2835810.

²² Morton, *Under western skies*, 14.

business plan, to use the dehaired hides to make leather that could be used by the settlement and fur trade, were less unusual.²³

Despite its short tenure, from sometime in 1819-1820 when it was set up as a joint stock venture while Pritchard was in England, until its demise around 1824 or 1825, the Company really only operated for a few years, the BWC offers an important window into the impacts the settlement would have going forward. The BWC, closely connected with Andrew Wedderburn Colvile and Jean Wedderburn Douglas, was a bellwether of the changes that were happening in and as a result of the settlement, and that would eventually spread out and impact the entire fur trade. The exact origins of the Buffalo Wool Company are difficult to trace. By the time that Pritchard returned to Red River in 1820 to head the concern, the executors of the Selkirk estate had approved it as a joint stock company, expecting the capital for the concern to be made up of investors they would personally hand pick. In a letter written by Andrew Wedderburn Colvile to Alex McDonell authorizing McDonell to lay out a plot of land for the venture, Wedderburn Colvile included the caveat that “You will insert a nominal consideration of 5/- and a condition that the Buffalo Wool Comp^y shall admit as partners such persons as may be nominated by the executors [of the Selkirk estate] to hold shares in the said Company until the whole number of twenty five shares are filled up, & that the shares now vacant shall not be filled up except upon such nomination.”²⁴ While Wedderburn Colvile may have seen this as leveraging his networks of business relationships, in the minds of some of those “chosen” to be “allowed” to purchase shares, the entire operation appears to have seemed closer to extortion to some of the prospective investors, and Pritchard encountered resistance from all sides from the beginning.

In the Red River Settlement, now overseen by Selkirk’s executors, and particularly by Wedderburn, power travelled along networks, networks that were carefully curated. “Lord Selkirk’s Executors had purchased the nomination of partners, with the view of obliging their

²³ Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its rise, progress and present state: With some account of the native races and its general history to the present day* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1856), 70.

²⁴ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 6870, 1820 May 25, [Andrew] Colvile to Alexander McDonell, Esq., available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/254?r=0&s=4. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

friends, upon whom their intention was to confer a benefit,” Pritchard told the gentlemen to whom Wedderburn Colvile had extended this option. To Wedderburn Colvile he wrote “The gentlemen you had been pleased to appoint to hold shares seemed determined to reject your offer.” The gentlemen, Pritchard reported, had told him that “I had been taken in both by yourself and the Company, that instead of the Buffaloe Wool Company, it was Colvile & Co., The Hudson Bay Company, or anything else but what it pretended to be.” “Mr. Bird,” almost certainly James Curtis Bird,²⁵ complained that the entire operation was nothing more than an attempt by Wedderburn Colvile and the executors of the Selkirk estate to “get from him, the little money he had earned in the Company’s service.”²⁶ Thomas,²⁷ Pritchard reported, did not show up when they were to meet to sign the joint stock agreement. On the other hand, Jacques Frederick Matthey²⁸ made a public show of confidence, stating “That Lord Selkirk had recommended the thing to him he was confident it would turn out well, if otherwise the loss of 200 pounds would not ruin him,” Then Matthey “immediately signed the agreement.”²⁹ In an 1821 letter to Wedderburn Colvile, Alexander Macdonell attempted to use his stock purchase as a way to improve his relationship with Wedderburn Colvile by including the information that he was drawing a bill on his account to purchase Buffalo Wool Company stock alongside requests that Wedderburn Colvile try again to find his son a “cadeticy” position, and, if his wife should come out the next year, that she be given an allowance like the one he had received when he

²⁵ HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Bird, James, Sr.,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/b/bird_james_sr.pdf. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

²⁶ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7288, 1821 June 9th Red River, Pritchard to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

²⁷ Bruce Peel, “THOMAS, THOMAS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 14, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/thomas_thomas_6E.html.

²⁸ Manitoba Historical Society, Memorable Manitobans, “Jacques Frederick Matthey,” available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/matthey_jf.shtml. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

²⁹ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7288, 1821 June 9th Red River, Pritchard to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

moved to the colony.³⁰ In terms of the creation and maintenance of webs of relationships, the BWC had an identifiable, but uneven impact.

Exactly what Selkirk's personal involvement in the formation of the BWC was is difficult to say. In Lord Selkirk's early plans for, and interventions in, the settlement, there is no mention of a company that would harvest bison wool; Selkirk's main interests lay in establishing a lucrative merino sheep operation.³¹ However, both Matthey and Pritchard felt that Selkirk was backing this venture. Perhaps Pritchard had discussed it in the short time that both he and Selkirk were in Britain in 1819. By the time that Pritchard was writing to Colvile, Lord Selkirk had died, and all business ran through Lord Selkirk's executors. What is clear is that the group of investors or potential investors in the Company was tightly controlled by the executors of the Selkirk estate, a group that included, as discussed earlier, Wedderburn Colvile and John Halkett, as well as James Wedderburn and Sir James Montgomery, all close relatives of Wedderburn Douglas either through birth, marriage, or both.³² For his part, Pritchard was almost certainly using the relationship he had established through his loyalty during the troubles at Red River to position himself well within the Company.

The hand-selected shareholders of the BWC were, in terms of race, class, and gender, homogenous. An 1823 list of the investors in the Buffalo Wool Company shows that the shareholders at that time were John Pritchard, who held three shares, and Lord Selkirk's physician and companion John Allan, who held two shares, both of whom had bought their stock in 1820; Alex McDonell, who held two shares, and Thomas, who had one share, Robert Dickson, with two shares, and Archibald Macdonald,³³ who held one share, had all bought into the

³⁰ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7427-7428, 13 Sept 1821, Alexander MacDonell to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/817?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

³¹ Lord Selkirk and Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1799-1809*, 17, 36.

³² Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 429.

³³ Jean Murray Cole, "McDONALD, ARCHIBALD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 15, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_archibald_8E.html.

Company in 1822. Robert Logan bought two shares in 1824. The resident members at Red River accepted Allan's resignation from the arrangement in July 1824.³⁴ Matthey, who signed in 1821 can be added to this list. What is striking about these names is that all of the "gentlemen" listed, whether they bought in enthusiastically or not, and including M^r. Bird, who seems to have held firm against the "invitation" to buy in, were well-positioned White men with connections to the settlement and to Lord Selkirk and his heirs. As Norma Jean Hall has pointed out in her thesis "A 'Perfect Freedom': Red River as a Settler Society, 1810 – 1870," among the Métis at Red River, there were individuals who held investments outside of the settlement, including in the Canadas and in England, yet there does not appear to have been any effort to engage Metis investors in the BWC.³⁵ Perhaps none of them felt the urge to put their money into something so speculative as this venture, but Pritchard's letter to Wedderburn Colvile makes no mention of any Metis as a potential investor at all.

Describing the BWC, probably the first historian to write about the Buffalo Wool Company, Alexander Ross, was unequivocally derisive "The plan contemplated by these ambitious and restless men was a joint stock concern, under the high-sounding title of the "Buffalo Wool Company," wrote Ross.³⁶ In December 1821, George Simpson reported to Wedderburn Colvile that "Mr. Pritchard and his buffaloe wool concern make a great noise, he is a wild visionary speculative creature, without a particle of solidity, and but a moderate share of judgement, if the business was properly managed, I have not a doubt of it turning out well."³⁷ Dismissing the Buffalo Wool Company as both foolish and brief, historians have tended to take their cue from Ross' lead. But was the Buffalo Wool Company such a poor idea? If measured in hindsight, and

³⁴ HBCA F.34, f 11 Buffalo Wool Company miscellaneous business records; LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8304 Pritchard to Colvile, 22 July 1824. M^r. Allan's resignation as a partner has been accepted by the resident members. Available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/522?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

³⁵ Norma Jean Hall, "'A 'Perfect Freedom': Red River as a Settler Society, 1810 – 1870," MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, Department of History, 2003, 94-95.

³⁶ Ross, *Red River Settlement*, 69.

³⁷ HBCA, MG2 A1/16, , f 1028A and ff (see esp. 1028 R), Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk collection, Mr. George Simpson to Mr. Colvile, York Factory 5th December 1821.

in terms of return on investment, the answer would have to be a resounding “yes.” In fact, if measured by any of the claims Pritchard made for the Company, in its short lifetime it failed to hit the mark. And yet, as a venture, it is still worth studying.

The reasons for the Buffalo Wool Company’s failure can be debated, as E.E. Rich noted, “‘Every Gentleman in the Service both Hudson’s Bay and North-West’, wrote Simpson in 1822, was ‘unfriendly to the Colony.’”³⁸ Pritchard’s own correspondence shows that these same gentlemen do not seem to have made any exception for the colony’s BWC. But Pritchard’s correspondence also shows that there were shortages of hides and many other problems that beset the Company as well.³⁹ In 1824, George Simpson laid all the blame at Pritchard’s feet, “The Creature is too sanguine and speculative, never Sober when he can get Liquor and altho’ he is extremely attentive and industrious, yet has no idea of Oconomy,” Simpson wrote to Wedderburn Colvile.⁴⁰ At the same time, given the fur traders’ animosity to the settlement, Pritchard’s own connections with Wedderburn Colvile and the Selkirk estate’s executors may well have done him more harm than good. Struggling with local resistance and circumstances that could not always be controlled, difficulties that were only compounded by the fact that there was very little market for the wool in Britain, the Company never prospered.⁴¹ In March of 1824, Wedderburn Colvile

³⁸ George Simpson and E. E. Rich. *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department, 1820-1821, and Report* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), xxi; LAC Selkirk Papers, 7288 ff, 1821 June 9th Red River, Pritchard to Colvile
https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1

³⁹ LAC Selkirk Papers, February 13, 1821, Buffalo Wool Company to James Bird (f 7082); July 25, 1821, J. Pritchard to Colvile (f 7330), available at
https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/469?r=0&s=1 and
https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/720?r=0&s=1. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁴⁰ LAC Selkirk Papers f 8218 ff, f 8247, 31 May 1824, Simpson to Colvile, available at
https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/436?r=0&s=1 and
https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/465?r=0&s=1. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁴¹ LAC Selkirk Papers, 1821 June 9th Red River, Pritchard to Colvile (7288 ff) available at
https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1; HBCA, MG2 A1/16, f 1028A and ff (see esp. ca 1028 R), Mr. George Simpson to Mr. Colvile, York Factory 5th December 1821.

told Pritchard that the BWC could not depend on the British market price for the wool to support the Company and he would have to find ways to market his wool locally.⁴² While this was certainly terrible news for Pritchard and the BWC, it appears that by this point Wedderburn Douglas may not have given up hope that she could turn the Company's fortunes around.

Wedderburn Douglas's contribution to the Buffalo Wool Company were located in her mobilization of her networks. In his book *The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists*, George Bryce, who had access to some of the Selkirk correspondence that has since been lost, wrote that "A voluminous correspondence given in many letters of Pritchard's to Lady Selkirk and other ladies of high station and to an English firm of manufacturers exploiting this project is before us. Sample squares of the cloth made of buffalo wool were distributed and in certain circles the novelty from the Red River was the 'talk of the town,' in London."⁴³ Apparently the height of society were discussing the anticipated arrival of buffalo wool shawls. "Captain Beaufort tells me that they have found out that the wool under the buffalo's long hair is finer than the material of the Cashmere shawls are made, and they are going to manufacture shawls of buffalo's wool, which are to shame and silence the looms of Cashmere. Would my mother choose to wait for one of these?" wrote Maria Edgeworth in 1822.⁴⁴ Lord Selkirk had visited with the novelist in Ireland during the summer of 1810.⁴⁵

The first hint of Wedderburn Douglas' direct intervention in the records that have survived to today in the "Selkirk Papers" is a letter from Adam Maitland, who was one of a number of

⁴² LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8160, Colvile to Pritchard, 11 March 1824, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/378?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 12 December 2020.

⁴³ George Bryce, *The romantic settlement of Lord Selkirk's colonists: The pioneers of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Russell, Lang, 1909), 173.

⁴⁴ Letter: [Maria Edgeworth] To Miss Lucy Edgeworth, "Miss Baillie's, Hampstead, Jan. 12, 1822 in Frances Anne Beaufort Edgeworth, *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth: With a Selection from Her Letters by the Late Mrs. Edgeworth*, vol. 2, (J. Masters and Son, 1867),167.

⁴⁵ Lord Selkirk and Bumsted, *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk, 1799-1809*, xvi.

named trustees in Selkirk's will,⁴⁶ to Lady Selkirk on the 22nd of April 1824. In it Maitland wrote "On my arrival here a few days ago I made application to Wellstood & Ogilvie the most eminent of our Shawl Manufacturers here respecting the small bag of Buffalo, or Bison Wool which Your Ladyship sent to my care."⁴⁷ The correspondence that followed details the painstaking process Wedderburn Douglas, Maitland, and a range of manufacturers, from spinners to dyers to weavers undertook to try to make the Buffalo Wool Company's bison hair bend to the needs of the cashmere shawl industry, and perhaps also to be suitable for use in making stockings and cravats.⁴⁸ In 1825, "Miss Blackburn," certainly a relation of Wedderburn Douglas through her mother's side of the family, asked for a shawl, while "Miss Wedderburn & Lady Hope," Lady Hope was probably Louisa Dorothea Wedderburn daughter of Sir John Wedderburn,⁴⁹ along with a Mr. Mure, possibly the family's steward William Mure,⁵⁰ visited the manufacturer's and inspected some of the finished item that year.⁵¹ In the end, the wool project was defeated by a combination of factors; the high cost of dehairing and spinning the yarn could not be offset by the price the finished fibre could be sold at, a price that was even more constrained because the fibres could not be whitened, and therefore really could only be produced in shades of brown and

⁴⁶ Archer Martin. *The Hudson's Bay Company's Land Tenures and the Occupation of Assiniboia* (London: W. Clowes, 1898), 198.

⁴⁷ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8184, 22 April 1824, A Maitland to Lady Selkirk, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/402?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁴⁸ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8183-8199, 22 April 1824, A. Maitland, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/402?r=0&s=3 ff. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁴⁹ Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book: A History of the Wedderburns in the Counties of Berwick, and Forfar, Designed of Wedderburn, Kingennie, Ester Powrie, Blackness, Balindean, and Gosford; and Their Younger Branches; Together with Some Account of Other Families of the Name, Wedderburn* vol. 2, (1898), 113.

⁵⁰ Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk a Life*, 61.

⁵¹ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8373, 18th July 1825, J. Ogilvie to Lady Selkirk, and f 8375, 2 August 1825, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/593?r=0&s=3, and https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/596?r=0&s=3. Accessed 13 December 2020.

black, and the market for these colours was not large enough to support the cost.⁵² As with many other venture capital projects, buffalo wool did not prove itself in the marketplace.

Despite its apparent failure, the story of the Buffalo Wool Company succeeds in exposing the ways that networks of relationship could import the symbolic violence of the colonial project. Just as Lady Selkirk wrote in 1816 of needing to bring “an appearance of regularity and civilization” to the settlement,⁵³ John Pritchard promoted the Company by extolling how the Buffalo Wool Company would bring “industry and regularities into the centre of the Settlement.”⁵⁴ The assumptions that are revealed in the organization of the Company as Pritchard outlined them foreshadow the changes that were set in motion the moment the Red River Settlement was created, and that began to really gain traction after 1821.

Members of the web that invested in the BWC were invested in a story of progress and civilization that positioned Indigenous people as primitive and in need of uplift. The BWC would still be going, providing work for the colony when cattle and farming at the settlement had made the pemmican trade obsolete, Pritchard had written to Colvile, assuming that it was inevitable that the colony would become more and more a little piece of England. The operation, backed by largely or wholly non-Indigenous investors, would promote that goal by offering an avenue whereby the executors could bring in and “Employ weavers, shoemakers, saddlers or other mechanics that work with leather or cloth,” provided that they brought in their own tools and planned to pay their own passage, boosting White immigration at little or no cost to the colony or to the HBC. In doing this, “the Indians” would be gratified to see the colony making their clothing. And “Independent of our usefulness to the colony we may perhaps boast that this Settlement is the first that ever exported to the Mother Country the staple article of her

⁵² LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8198-8199, Wellstood and Ogilvie to Lady Selkirk, 21 March 1825, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/416?r=0&s=3 and ff. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁵³ AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes,” extract, J.[ean] S.[elkirk] to Kate, Montreal, March 27, 1816.

⁵⁴ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7288, 1821 June 9th Red River, Pritchard to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

commerce; and that too of so fine a quality, and in our Infant state to have established manufactories in the centre of North America I think is praiseworthy,” added Pritchard. As well, he noted, “Indian women” could “be very usefully employed either in spinning wool, dressing leather or in plucking the Hides,” all repetitive, gendered, low paying and low status labour.⁵⁵ “The men and lads manipulated the hides, and it is well known that an expert hand at pulling wool could gain from six to ten shillings per day; even boys thought themselves ill-compensated for their labor at anything less than four or five shillings per diem,” wrote historian Donald Gunn. “Female labor was neither over-looked nor undervalued, as all who could spin were invited to the Factory to receive wool to make into yarn, for which labor they were paid at the rate of one shilling per pound.”⁵⁶ In a letter to Wedderburn Colvile in 1821, Pritchard asked him to consider sending as many boys as possible of 12 years and upwards,” who would be engaged for a period of “one or more years. Their time and salary to commence on their arrival at the settlement. By this means they would work out their passage money with us, and as soon as they had earned the requisite sum, you would be reimbursed the expense of bringing them to the Country,” wrote Pritchard.⁵⁷ As already discussed, indentured service in the fur trade involved a degree of unfreedom, for young boys far from their families, Pritchard’s proposal, had it materialized, would likely have been at the high end of that scale.

In 1820, as John Pritchard was returning on the HBC’s ship the *Eddystone* from England, the project of “regularizing” and “civilizing” the settlement was gaining momentum. The passenger list for the ship Pritchard was travelling on is evidence of this. On his voyage, Pritchard was accompanied by the Anglican missionary, The Reverend John West, and, also supported by the Church Missionary Society, the settlement’s new teacher, George Harbridge, comfortably

⁵⁵ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7288, 1821 June 9th Red River, Pritchard to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/676?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁵⁶ Donald Gunn and Charles Richard Tuttle, *History of Manitoba, from the earliest settlement to 1835 by the late Hon. Donald Gunn, and from 1835 to the admission of the province into the Dominion by Charles R. Tuttle* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co, 1880), 231.

⁵⁷ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7330, 25th July 1821, 7330 ff Pritchard to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/720?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

located as cabin passengers. The missionaries' farmer Samuel West was lodged between decks. The group were on their way to establish a Church of England presence at Red River. Along with them, William Higgs, a tanner destined for the BWC, was on the boat as a steerage passenger, while John Wicks, a furrier, and his wife, also hired to work for the concern, were travelling between decks.⁵⁸ Their arrival, along with Pritchard's attempts to get a bark mill transported to the settlement, a piece of equipment used in European tanning methods, highlight the expected changes that "regularity" encoded.⁵⁹ In a letter to his brother, written in 1832, John Pritchard mused that the Buffalo Wool Company "which although unfortunate in its result (being ruined by the flood of 1826) was productive of good to the settlement during its operation, the beneficial effects of which are felt to this day."⁶⁰ Donald Gunn saw the positive in the Buffalo Wool Company as being that the wage labour it provided "enabled the settlers to obtain a little money at the right time," so that they were able to purchase cattle.⁶¹ On the other hand, Pritchard, who had a tendency to see moralistic messages in events, may well have meant more than that in his use of the word "good."

Pritchard's own life was something of a template for the changes the establishment of the Red River Settlement foreshadowed. In a letter written to his brother in 1825, Pritchard described his daily life, painting it as that of a comfortable country gentleman. "When not employed in the factory, Mrs. P and the children join me, or rather I them, in cultivating the farm or garden, by which means we raise wheat and vegetables nearly sufficient for our maintenance and clothing.... Our Sundays are given to the attendance of two Churches, one above and one below

⁵⁸ HBCA E.4/1a, f 47, 53. Baptisms of: Higgs, Emily Henrietta; Higgs, Olympia; HBCA E.4/1b, f 206, Marriage of: Higgs William Walne and Hoerner, Henrietta; HBCA F.34/1, Buffalo Wool Company Account on HBC; HBCA, C.1/312 f 3, 4, 1820, Ship's Log, Eddystone.

⁵⁹ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7320, December 19th, 1820, Pritchard to William Williams, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/710?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁶⁰ John Pritchard and George Bryce, ed., *Glimpses of the past in the Red River Settlement: From letters of Mr. John Pritchard, 1805-1836* (Middle Church, Man.: Rupert's Land Indian Industrial School Press, 1892), 23.

⁶¹ Gunn and Tuttle, *History of Manitoba*, 233.

our residence,” he wrote.⁶² Pritchard’s wife in these letters was the former Catherine McGillivray, a Selkirk Settler who had been widowed in 1813.⁶³ In 1814, Miles Macdonell noted in his journal for the 21st of June 1814 that “Mr. Pritchard is determined on being a settler & wished to have the mouth of river Salle received for him.” Pritchard’s Indigenous partner was uncomfortable with this move into an unstable settlement in the midst of the ongoing violence there and had taken refuge in the NWC fort at the Forks. On the 11th of May 1815, Miles Macdonell wrote in his journal that Pritchard was unhappy with this arrangement, saying that “he cannot keep house or live comfortably without a woman. he is resolved to marry the widow of the late Hector McLean who he had seen last evening & was much pleased with. He obtained her own consent & that of all her friends & I married them at 11 at night at M^r. McLeans.”⁶⁴

The structure of the Buffalo Wool Company, like the structure of Pritchard’s own family, reflected the changes beginning to take shape in the settlement. A European-style patriarchy was starting to settle in, and the Buffalo Wool Company reflected this in its hierarchical and patriarchal structure that was informed by gender, race, and class. The addition of specialist White men in the form of a tanner and a furrier highlight these changes. Although Norma Jean Hall notes that Indigenous women benefitted from the work the Buffalo Wool Company’s factory offered them,⁶⁵ the nature of that work was a far cry from the integrated processing of hides into various commodities, value added sale items, and family staples that they were known for. Factory work, even at this early stage, was specialized, and the specialties open to women working for the Buffalo Wool Company tended to be lower status and more repetitive and

⁶² Pritchard and Bryce, *Glimpses of the past in the Red River Settlement*, 16.

⁶³ HBCA E.7/6, List of Red River servants and settlers, 1811-1817, “6. McLean Hector, settler, 1812 died at the Colony Summer 1813 left wife Catherine McGillivray,” and “McGillivray Kitty settler formerly Mrs. Hector McLean now Mrs. Pritchard.” See also Miles Macdonell’s Journal in: LAC Selkirk Papers, f 16871: Jan 3, 1814, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c16/385?r=0&s=2. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

⁶⁴ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 170005, Miles Macdonell, Journal, 11 May 1815, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c16/521?r=0&s=1. Accessed on 13 December 2020. Duckworth notes that Pritchard’s Indigenous wife and their son William seem to have ended up with engagé Jean Baptiste Welles, *Friends, Foes, and Furs*, 390.

⁶⁵ Hall, ““A ‘Perfect Freedom’,” 119.

menial. Traditionally, Indigenous women had been responsible for processing hides, from the point of rough butchering to the production of food, leather and leather goods, including moccasins. These activities required social cohesion, and were part of not only material production, but of a rich family and community life, forming and formed by the webs of relationship within the community.⁶⁶ As Hall has noted about the production of pemmican, while these roles were gendered, women's skills were valuable and valued, and had a direct impact on the health and success of the family.⁶⁷ In her essay "Complimentary Relationships: A Review of Indigenous Studies," Leah Snider notes that "Colonial/patriarchal systems rely on a gender/sex distinction to create a hierarchy where men rule and maintain dominance over women." This practice has enormous implications. This hierarchy, notes Snider, can be used "as a justification for the conquest of pre-determined 'weaker' and thus feminine 'others.'"⁶⁸ The Buffalo Wool Company was conceived of as capable of producing more than shawls and rope, it was predicated on, and in, a binary and patriarchal understanding of "civilization." When the American Stephen Long Expedition travelled through Red River, they described the BWC factory, noting that "A tanner, who appears to understand his business well, has been brought over, and makes very good leather from buffalo hides, so that they are not all at present reduced to the necessity of wearing moccasins."⁶⁹

In the end, the Buffalo Wool Company did not last long enough to disrupt the local social and economic systems that had served Indigenous people for generations. But the ideologies, the plans, and the operations of the BWC expose assumptions about "regularity," "civilization,"

⁶⁶ Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 40.

⁶⁷ George Colpitts describes bison processing in *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 86ff. Hall, "'A 'Perfect Freedom'," 101.

⁶⁸ Leah Snider, "Complimentary Relationships a Review of Indigenous Studies," in *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, eds. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 62-79, 69-70.

⁶⁹ William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Sources of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnepeek, Lake of the Woods, Etc: Performed in the Year 1823, by Order of the Hon. J.C. Calhoun, Secretary of War Under the Command of Stephen H. Long, Major U.S.T.E.*, (H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1824), 65.

paternalism, class, gender, and race, that would continue to inform plans for the settlement in the years to come. Taken as a whole, the BWC, entangled in the webs of the Wedderburn and Douglas families, offers a glimpse into the processes at work in the Red River Settlement in the 1820s that would contribute to many changes, and to a move away from what Snider refers to as “complimentarity,” in gender roles, which “recognizes specifically delineated gender-based communal responsibilities,” without enforcing “strict binaries.”⁷⁰ The ideologies that underpinned the assumptions that went into devising the BWC, which would not die with the operation, would continue to manifest in the Red River Settlement and insinuate themselves into and through networks of relationship.

Family, business, sugar and fur: George Simpson

As the case of John Pritchard shows, the spider’s webs of relationships that connected families and businesses like Wedderburn Douglas’ could be added onto, even if sometimes this was only temporary. These additions could be limited, conditional, and fragile, and could be relatively quickly abandoned, but they could also prove remarkably durable in the right circumstances, and in the right hands, as the case of George Simpson demonstrates. George (later Sir George) Simpson was probably born in or around Lochbroom, Scotland in 1786 or 1787, although family descendant and genealogist Dale Terrence Lahey, who wrote a popular biography of Simpson, places his birth as late as 1792. The passenger list for the *William Byrnes*, on which Simpson returned to Canada in 1830, shows his age as 35, which would suggest he may have been born closer to 1792 than 1787.⁷¹ His father, George Simpson Sr. was a Writer in Dingwall, his mother has never been identified. George’s parents were not married at the time of his birth. Much of Simpson’s childhood appears to have been overseen by his aunt, Mary Simpson. His education was probably at the parish school, and then through his employment when he moved to London to work in the sugar brokerage firm of Graham and Simpson, where his uncle Geddes Mackenzie

⁷⁰ Leah Snider “Complimentary Relationships: A Review of indigenous Studies.” 62-79, 63.

⁷¹ “George Simpson,” 1830, Apr 16, in passenger list for the *William Byrnes* in New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957, original data *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897*. Microfilm Publication M237, 675 rolls. NAI: 6256867. Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36. National Archives at Washington, D.C. Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

Simpson was a partner.⁷² E.E. Rich, in his documentary history *Part of dispatch from George Simpson Esqr.*, states that the young George Simpson lived with his grandfather, the Reverend Thomas Simpson when very young, then with his aunt Mary, moving to London after his aunt's marriage in 1807.⁷³ The complicated genealogy of the firm of Graham and Simpson has already been discussed in a previous chapter. In 1812, Graham and Simpson merged with Wedderburn and Company, which may have been the point at which George Simpson met Andrew Wedderburn Colvile.⁷⁴ So, at least from 1807, George Simpson's life was immersed in the culture of West Indian sugar plantations and the mercantile economy that depended on both the plantations themselves, and the slavery on which they were built. At least from 1812, Simpson was also in contact with Wedderburn Colvile, whose connections with slavery are well documented.

If changes in the laws surrounding chattel slavery in the British Empire travelled to the Northern North American fur trade through Andrew Wedderburn Colvile's increased interest in diversifying his business focuses and subsequent engagement with the HBC's London committee, they also brought a new HBC overseas governor into the fur trade, one with personal and business connections to West Indian sugar and slavery, in the person of George Simpson. In 1820, two important events took place in George Simpson's life. First, the partnership of James Webster and Geddes Mackenzie Simpson of Tower Street, where Simpson worked, became

⁷² John S. Galbraith, "SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 17, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html; D.T. Lahey, *George Simpson: Blaze of Glory*. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 20.

⁷³ George Simpson and E. E. Rich. *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson, Esqr., Governor of Ruperts Land, to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, March 1, 1829: Continued and Completed March 24 and June 5, 1829* (Toronto, ON: Champlain Society, 1947), xii.

⁷⁴ John S. Galbraith, "SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 17, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html; Simpson and Rich, *Part of dispatch from George Simpson*, xii.

bankrupt.⁷⁵ Simpson alluded to this in a letter to Wedderburn Colvile sent from York Factory in September 1821, where he thanked Wedderburn Colvile for “the kind mention you have been pleased to make of my Tower Street Friends who I am rejoiced to learn are now on their feet again and likely to do well.”⁷⁶ The second event was what appeared to be the imminent and impending arrest of the HBC’s Governor William Williams in Rupert’s Land. Simpson had done some work for the Company as early as 1818, and in 1820, encouraged by Wedderburn Colvile, the HBC’s Governor and London Committee appointed Simpson governor-in-chief locum tenens, in an effort to ensure a senior administrative presence in North America should Williams be arrested.⁷⁷ With the merger of the NWC and HBC in 1821, the newly formed company divided its operations into a Northern and a Southern Department. William Williams was designated governor of the more profitable Northern Department, but chose the Southern Department instead, leaving Simpson to the governorship of the Northern Department.

Writing about Simpson’s move from his uncle’s sugar brokerage to the HBC, E.E. Rich noted

It seems extraordinary that the Governor and Committee should have chosen for such a responsible post a young scots clerk ... who had not only no practical knowledge of the fur-trade, but had never been in British North America: but he had evidently impressed those with whom he had come into contact as having the qualities and energy and efficiency, of tact and finesse, and of courage and firmness that the position called for.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “Graham & Simpson,” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/firm/view/2144929067>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁷⁶ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7374-7375, Simpson to Colvile, York Factory, 8th September 1821, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/786?r=0&s=3 and ff. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁷⁷ John S. Galbraith, “SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 17, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html.

⁷⁸ Simpson and Rich, *Part of dispatch from George Simpson*, xii – xiii.

Considering Simpson's life in the context of the spider's webs of relationships that knit together business and personal relationships, and which could spread across oceans, Simpson's career trajectory might not be quite so difficult to understand.

There can be little doubt that Simpson possessed many of the qualities that the HBC sought in an overseas governor. However, his success, based not only on work but also on opportunity, is a clear demonstration of the ways that webs of relationship could be extended, and of the lack of distinct boundaries between the personal and business that these webs represented. On the 16th of August 1822, in a letter covering a range of business matters, Simpson wrote to Wedderburn Colvile

Pray accept my grateful thanks for your kind and considerate attention to my private affairs, the view you, M^r. Garry & My Uncle have taken of a certain subject perfectly coincide with my own and I believe things are best as they stand for the present, in the course of a year or two hence when the business is brought into a regular train I should certainly wish to get Home for a Season if my inclination continues to lead the same way, but my presence here is indispensable for two years at least and by that time I may cool upon it, but I shall ever entertain a grateful sense of the Friendly interest you have pleased to take in all that concerns me.... Your Salutary advice in regard to my general line of conduct shall be religiously observed;⁷⁹

In September of 1823, Simpson wrote to Colvile noting that he had asked for leave but would leave it up to Nicholas Garry whether he would go to England on leave or remain in North America and travel to the Columbia. "You know the object of my visit to England and I have pointed out where my services and presence may be useful, and have no desire that my private views should interfere with the interests of the Service," wrote Simpson. "Permit me now to

⁷⁹ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7757 ff, esp. 7762, York Factory 16th August 1822, Simpson to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/1153?r=0&s=3 and https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/1158?r=0&s=3. Accessed 13 December 2020.

return my most grateful acknowledgements for the kind and Friendly interest you have always been pleased to take in my concerns and to assure you it shall be my constant study to merit a continuance of the favourable opinion you have been pleased to honour me with,” he added.⁸⁰

In March of 1824, Wedderburn Colvile wrote to Simpson

As to your coming home, particularly with the object which you have in view, I think it will be better to postpone it both on your own account & that of the Company. A wife I fear would be an embarrassment to you until the business gets into more complete order & until the necessity of those distant journies is over & if it be delayed one or two years you will be able to accumulate something before the expences of a family come upon you.⁸¹

Advising Simpson to remain in North America until he could see the Red River Settlement was “in the right road,” at which point he should turn his attention to the Columbia and Mackenzie River departments, as well as New Caledonia, Wedderburn Colvile cautioned Simpson against making a winter journey west, a plan Simpson had hoped would allow him to return to England the next year.⁸² In August of 1824, Simpson wrote to Wedderburn Colvile that he would not be returning to England that year. Instead, he would travel west, over the mountains. He was doing this, he wrote, in the best interest of the Company. He had planned to travel to England on “subjects connected with my own private matters and the Company’s business... and I take this opportunity of returning my best acknowledgements and most grateful thanks for the kind interest You are pleased to take in the former for which I shall always consider myself under

⁸⁰ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8043 ff, Simpson to Colvile York Factory 8th September 1823, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/258?r=0&s=3, and https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/226?r=0&s=3. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁸¹ LAC Selkirk Papers, 8148 ff, Colvile to Simpson 11 March 1824, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/368?r=0&s=4. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁸² LAC Selkirk Papers, 8148 ff, 11 March 1824, Colvile to Simpson, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/368?r=0&s=4. Accessed 13 December 2020.

deep and lasting obligations to You.” Simpson had, he wrote, “abandoned the idea of visiting England unless in connexion with my public business.” In a post script added on the 12th of August, Simpson wrote that it might be possible for him to leave the country in 1825/1826 after all, in which case, “it might be highly important to the general intereststhat I should visit England by the ship of next Season and return in the Spring by Canada, or go home by Canada as you might think desirable.”⁸³ Simpson did indeed travel to England in 1825; while there he met with the HBC’s London Committee, and the Company recalled Governor William Williams. When Simpson returned to North America it was as the Governor of both the HBC’s Northern and Southern Departments, but without a White bride. ⁸⁴

Simpson continued to trust not only his professional but his personal life to the directions of his mentor. From 73 Tower Street, London, the address of his old employer, Simpson wrote to Colvile in February 1826 assuring him “that the lively interest you have uniformly been pleased to take in me and the kindness and Friendship you have on all occasions evinced towards me have made an indelible impression on my mind and shall ever be most gratefully acknowledged & remembered by me.”⁸⁵ Simpson remained in North America until 1829, but he was clearly growing impatient as he waited for a chance to take a White wife. Writing to Wedderburn Colvile that year, concerned about his own health, Simpson mused that “a trip to England I think might be of service to me ...indeed I think it will be proper for me to go whether they [the London Committee] have or not [agreed] for the benefit of Medical advice.”⁸⁶ Simpson sailed

⁸³ LAC Selkirk Papers, 8326 ff, Simpson to Colvile 9 August 1824, York Factory, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/544?r=0&s=3. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁸⁴ John S. Galbraith, “SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 24, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html.

⁸⁵ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8326 ff, Feby 1826, 73 Tower Street, Simpson to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/640?r=0&s=4. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁸⁶ LAC Selkirk Papers, 8473ff, 4 June 1829, Simpson to Colvile, Red River Settlement, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/696?r=0&s=4. Accessed 13 December 2020.

from New York in September of that year, arriving in London in October.⁸⁷ On the 24th of February, 1830, at the Church of St Mary, St. Leonard, Bromley, Tower Hamlets, England, George Simpson married his cousin Frances Simpson, the eighteen year old daughter of his uncle and former employer, the business partner of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, Geddes Simpson. As Frances Simpson was a minor, the marriage took place with the consent of her father.⁸⁸

It is not clear whether George Simpson had a particular person in mind to marry, or whether he simply wanted a well-placed White wife who would connect him to her network of relationship webs when he left for Britain that year. Arthur Silver Morton has speculated that the original object of Simpson's intention to marry may have been an Ellen or Eleanor Pooler, sister of a friend of his.⁸⁹ Certainly, when he alluded to the interest Wedderburn Colvile, his uncle, and Nicholas Garry were taking in this matter in 1822, his future wife Frances Simpson would have been about ten years old, and therefore probably not a prospective partner. It is entirely possible that the choice of a particular partner was not the first step in Simpson's quest for a White wife, and that engaging in a marriage that was compatible with the web of relationships that connected him to Wedderburn Colvile and his uncle was a more important consideration. In his correspondence, Simpson never failed to thank Wedderburn Colvile for his personal interest and advice. The correspondence between the two men, and the relationship it reveals, is clear evidence of the interconnected edges and overlapping threads that business and personal webs of relationship could support. Figure 5 below is a relationship map that illustrates some of George Simpson's key relationships.

⁸⁷ John S. Galbraith, "SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 24, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html.

⁸⁸ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: *p88/mry2/024*, *London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1932* [database on-line]. Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

⁸⁹ Arthur Silver Morton, *Sir George Simpson, overseas governor of the Hudson's Bay Company: A pen picture of a man of action* (Toronto & Vancouver: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1944), 161.

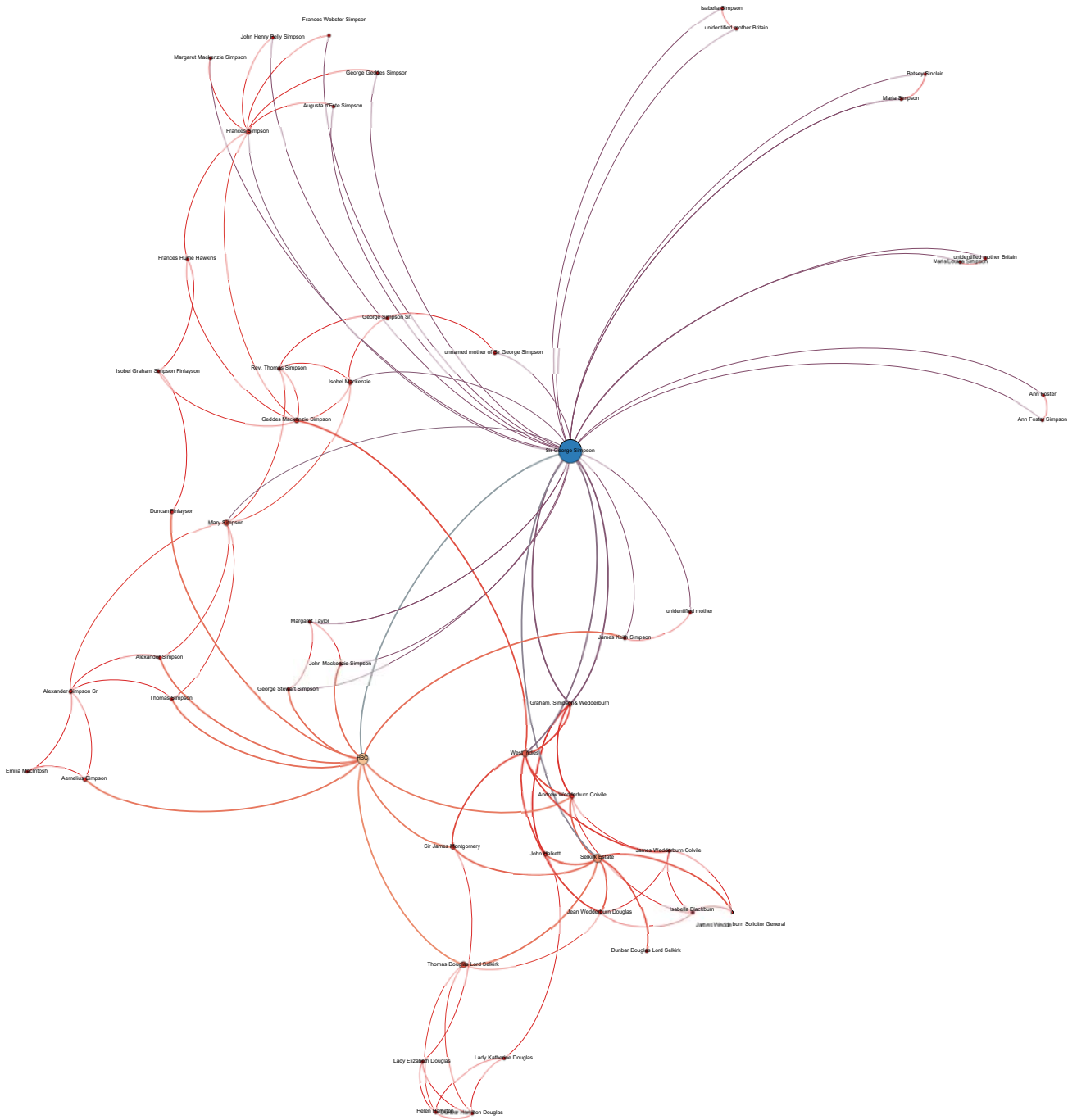


Figure 5: Relationship map of some of George Simpson’s key relationships.

Much has been written about George Simpson and the ways that his views on race, gender, and social class shaped and formed the fur trade after his arrival in 1820. Less has been done to

explore the ways that his experiences in the culture of the West Indian sugar trade, and his personal relationships with men from that world including his uncle Geddes Simpson and Andrew Wedderburn Colvile might have informed those views, as well as his manifestation of them in North America. In her essay "The Making of Race and Place in Nineteenth-Century British Honduras," Melissa A. Johnson describes a process of racial construction in Belize in which different racial groups were constructed as "better suited to some forms of labor-in-nature than others." This process, underwritten by British colonialism, "slavery and an increasingly unequal distribution of land," had its roots in colonial discourse, and "presumed particular relationships to the natural environment for each racial group." Of interest, when considering George Simpson's early tenure in the 1820s in Rupert's Land, is Johnson's observation that "Belizean "Creoles" (people of mixed African and European descent) were cast as physiologically excellent wood cutters, but as averse to agriculture."⁹⁰

Read beside Simpson's constructions of Metis and indeed of Indigenous people in general, Johnson's description of racialized constructions of Belizean Creole people seem eerily familiar. "The Freeman and half-breed population is now getting very formidable in point of numbers and live entirely by the Buffalo Hunt," Simpson told Wedderburn Colvile in 1824.⁹¹ Living "entirely by the chase," when domestic cattle became plentiful in the settlement, and the market for Metis products derived from the bison chase dried up, "unless early means are taken to bring them round to industrious habits and with draw them from the Plains I do most seriously apprehend that they will in due time be the destruction of this Colony," wrote Simpson.⁹² As work by

⁹⁰ While beyond the scope of this study, Johnson also notes that even within the context of "colonial control, colonial subjects in Belize created relationships to the land that both built upon and challenged colonial racial constructions." Melissa A. Johnson, "The Making of Race and Place in Nineteenth-Century British Honduras." *Environmental History* 8, no. 4 (2003): 598-617. Accessed November 18, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3985885>. 598. Authors including Norma Jean Hall have shown a similar pattern around Red River.

⁹¹ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8218 ff Simpson to Colvile, 1824, 31 May, Red River, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/461?r=0&s=1. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁹² LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8218 ff Simpson to Colvile, 1824, 31 May, Red River, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/461?r=0&s=1. Accessed 13 December 2020.

authors including Jennifer S.H. Brown, Sylvia Van Kirk, and Denise Fuchs have shown, Simpson's constructions of race were flat and profoundly limited, and what they left out about the rich, resilient, and sophisticated lives Metis lived at this time speaks volumes. But his views were also reflected in the structure of the colony, and repeated by his subordinates. In his *Narrative of the discoveries on the north coast of America*, George Simpson's cousin and secretary, Thomas Simpson, reproduced this construction, writing that "the roving and indolent habits of the half-breed race, who form the mass of the population, and love the chase of the buffalo better than the drudgery of agriculture or regular industry, seem to preclude the probability of this colony rising to commercial importance."⁹³ The importance of the natural environment in the construction of the Metis is foregrounded in part of Simpson's solution to the restless threat he painted the Metis as posing. In 1828 the HBC's Northern Council appointed Métis leader Cuthbert Grant "Warden of the Plains," highlighting and in some ways codifying the connection to place.⁹⁴ This characterization of racialized people as not only outside of civilization, but as a threat to it would have been familiar not only to Simpson, but to his superiors, and particularly to Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, who would have been well acquainted with anxiety about slave revolts in the West Indies.

Simpson's construction of certain racial groups as suited to or drawn to certain occupations or locations, unable to adapt to inevitable change without supervision and guidance, unsuited to certain sorts of occupations or lifestyles, can be seen in his approach to education as well. As J. Orin Oliphant noted in his article "George Simpson and Oregon Missions," "while George Simpson, a practical sort of man, could be publicly supportive of projects endorsed by the London Committee, his private opinions about the appropriateness of educating Indigenous

⁹³ Thomas Simpson, Alexander Simpson, Sir William Jackson Hooker, *Narrative of the discoveries on the north coast of America, effected by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company during the years 1836-39* (London: Richard Bentley, 1843), 13.

⁹⁴ George Woodcock, "GRANT, CUTHBERT (d. 1854)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 19, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/grant_cuthbert_1854_8E.html.

people was quite different.⁹⁵ Under the heading of “Private Remarks” in one of his letters to Wedderburn Colvile Simpson expressed his personal reservations on the topic of providing education to Indigenous people. Educating Indigenous people, he told Wedderburn Colvile “will be attended with little other good, than filling the pockets and bellies of some hungry Missionaries and schoolmasters and rearing the Indians in habits of indolence.” Educating Indigenous people “would in my opinion do harm instead of good to the Fur Trade,” Simpson continued.

I have always remarked that an Enlightened Indian is good for nothing, there are several of them about the Bay side and totally useless even the half Breeds of the Country who have been educated in Canada are blackguards of the very worst description, they not only pick up the vices of the Whites upon which they improve but retain those of the Indian in their utmost extent. The Indians of this Country are certainly quick of apprehension and have a thirst for knowledge; they would gladly be relieved of the burthen of maintaining their children, but I suspect the plan would not be productive of any real good.⁹⁶

Finally, Simpson concluded, “I give my ideas thus freely for your private information in case the subject should come before the committee, if they were known by the very pious I might be looked upon as a true North Wester.”⁹⁷ In these remarks, Simpson was going against the views of HBC London Committee member Benjamin Harrison, who had gone so far as to publish a pamphlet in 1815 proposing that the HBC could run schools for Indigenous students throughout

⁹⁵ J. Orin Oliphant, "George Simpson and Oregon Missions." *Pacific Historical Review* 6, no. 3 (1937): 213-48. Accessed November 18, 2020. doi:10.2307/3633296, 214.

⁹⁶ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7587ff, see especially f 7605, 20 May 1822, Simpson to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/996?r=0&s=3, and https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/996?r=0&s=3. Accessed 13 December 2020.

⁹⁷ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7587ff, see especially f 7605, 20 May 1822, Simpson to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/996?r=0&s=3, and https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/996?r=0&s=3. Accessed 13 December 2020.

its territory.⁹⁸ In his own private letter to Simpson in 1824, Wedderburn Colville reinforced the point that the political climate in Britain made it necessary that the Company support missions and missionaries in its territories “for the conversion of the Indians.” Wedderburn Colville continued, “indeed it w^d be extremely impolitic in the present temper disposition of the public in this Country to show any unwillingness to assist in such an object. By uniting with the Missionary Society & the Settlement these objects are obtained safely, conveniently & cheaply.”⁹⁹

On the ground, Simpson’s response was grudging. His opposition to the education of Indigenous people played out in his persistent obstructionism aimed at attempts by William Cockran at the Anglican mission he was trying to establish at Netley Creek where Cockran wanted to build and maintain a “school of industry.”¹⁰⁰ Simpson’s explanation was a concern that so many “Indians” gathered together in an agricultural community near the settlement posed a danger to public order.¹⁰¹ But the Roman Catholic mission also undertook to establish a similar “School of Industry,” which Simpson grudgingly supported for about three years, and then withdrew funding from, effectively closing it down. In the case of the Catholic school, it was operated to train girls and run by women, with no suggestion of any agricultural village as part of the plan. The idea was to bring two women from Quebec, who would teach girls and young women skills such as spinning, dyeing, and weaving. Two women were found, Madame Lapalice (nee Marguerite Chesnay) and Ursule Grenier. Arriving in 1838, the women were barely set up when

⁹⁸ Tolly Bradford and Rich Connors, “The Making of a Company Colony: The Fur Trade War, the Colonial Office, and the Metamorphosis of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” forthcoming, 190.

⁹⁹ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 8148, 11 March 1824, to G. Simpson from Wedderburn Colville, private, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c8/366?r=0&s=4 8148. Accessed 13 December 2020.

¹⁰⁰ J. E. Foster, “COCKRAN, WILLIAM,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 19, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cockran_william_9E.html; Hal Guest, Parks Canada Manuscript Report Number 443, “The Historic Landscape of the Parsonage at St. Andrew’s, with some comment on the role of the Church Missionary Society at Red River, 1822 -1887,” (1981), 1-6, available at <http://parkscanadahistory.com/series/mrs/443.pdf>, Accessed 14 December 2020.

¹⁰¹ Henry Budd and Katherine Pettipas, *The Diary of the Reverend Henry Budd: 1870-1875* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1974), x-xi.

the building they were using burned down. The school then moved into Bishop Provencher's home, while he moved into his sacristy, as plans were made to erect a new building for the school. But the HBC had committed to just three years of support for the school, and at the end of those three years, under Simpson's advice, withdrew funding, without which, the school closed.¹⁰²

Simpson's positioning of Indigenous people with respect to education played out in his own family as well. A brief comparison of the lives of two of his children, John Henry Pelly Simpson, the child of Simpson with his White wife Frances Simpson, and George Stewart Simpson, the child of Simpson and one of his Indigenous partners Marguerite Taylor, highlights the differences in the educational trajectories of the two. John Henry Pelly Simpson was born in June 1850, at Lachine, Quebec to Frances and Sir George Simpson.¹⁰³ His mother would die in 1853, and his father in 1860, but his education was provided for. After graduating from Clare College, University of Cambridge, he was a Student of the Inner Temple, and was then called to the bar 6 June 1874, practicing law in London during his professional life.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Diane Michelle Boyd, "The Rise and Development of Female Catholic Education in the Nineteenth-Century Red River Region: The Case of Cathetine Mulaire," MA thesis, University of Manitoba, History Department, 1999, 42; Estelle Mitchell, *The Grey Nuns of Montreal at the Red River, 1844-1984* (n.p.: n.d.), 4-5; A. G. Morice, *Histoire de l'Eglise catholique dans l'Ouest canadien du lac Supérieur au Pacifique (1659-1915)*, vol. I (Saint-Boniface: Chez L'auteur Montreal: Granger Frères, 1921), 238-239; HBCA E.5/9, Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Swampy Indian Settlement, 1838, f 21, f 23.

¹⁰³ Baptism: John Henry Pelly Simpson, Lachine Anglican, Saint Stephen 1852, in Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1968. Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Sylvia Van Kirk, "SIMPSON, FRANCES RAMSAY," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 19, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_frances_ramsay_8E.html; John S. Galbraith, "SIMPSON, Sir GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 19, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simpson_george_8E.html; Joseph Foster, *Men-at-the-bar: A Biographical Hand-list of the Members of the Various Inns...Register*, University of Cambridge (1870), 309; Kelly's Post Office London Directory (London: Kelly's Directories, 1891), 1343.

George Stewart Simpson was probably born the 1st of February 1827, based on a tiny cryptic notation added into the York Factory Journal for that date: “\G.S. born\say 11th March R Miles.”¹⁰⁵ His mother was Marguerite or Margaret “Peggy” Taylor, who would have another child with Simpson, George’s brother John McKenzie Simpson as well. Taylor was the daughter of HBC Sloop Master George Taylor, and sister to Simpson’s personal servant, Thomas “Tom” Taylor. During his relationship with Margaret Taylor Simpson seems to have treated her, and expected her to have been treated, as his wife as he traveled in the fur trade. In 1829, as Simpson was headed east on his way to England where he would marry his cousin Frances, he left Taylor at Bas de la Riviere, or Fort Alexander. There she gave birth to George’s brother John McKenzie Simpson. There seems to have been little to warn the young family at Fort Alexander of Simpson’s marriage in England; the fur trader John Stuart wrote to Simpson during his absence that “A little while ago when at supper I was telling Geordy that in two months and ten days he would see his father,” during Simpson’s absence.¹⁰⁶

On Simpson’s return to North America with his new White bride, Taylor and her young family remained at Fort Alexander until Simpson arranged for her marriage to Amable Hogue, who was working at the Red River Settlement, in March of 1831.¹⁰⁷ That same year, John Stuart, who, as Erin Millions notes, clearly had a fondness for “Geordy,” wrote to Simpson urging him to educate his son

¹⁰⁵ HBCA B.239/a/136 f 111 d, York Factory Journal, 1822-1827.

¹⁰⁶ Sylvia Van Kirk, “Women and the fur trade,” *Beaver, outfit 303 (winter 1972)*: 4–21, 14; Brown, *Strangers in Blood* 125-126; Morton, *Sir George Simpson, overseas governor of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 159; HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Simpson, George Stewart,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/s/simpson_george-stewart.pdf. Accessed 13 December 2020, Glenbow Archives, Warren Sinclair Genealogy, family sheet, Simpson family, available at <https://glenbow.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/m-8736-752.pdf>. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

¹⁰⁷ HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Hogue Amable,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/h/hogue_amable.pdf. Accessed 13 December 2020; Morton, *Sir George Simpson, overseas governor of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 166.

It would grieve the little fellow to leave me and I assure you it would pain me to part with him and in consequence I hope you will not forgive the error I commit, if it be one, in Keeping him and not attribute it to disobedience, if you desire it, he will be sent along with the Pidgeon, when he returns to Red River, he will have a good size canoe, and the danger will then be less, but if I was allowed to follow the dictates of my own mind, with respect to Geordy instead of sending him to Red River, where among the crows he will be in a manner lost, I would this very summer send him along with a little fellow of my own to England (or Scotland)...He is a fine Child that ought not to be neglected and it is Education that makes the man.¹⁰⁸

In his book *Sixty years on the frontier in the Pacific Northwest*, Andrew Dominique Pambrun also described the pressure Simpson was under to educate his son

[Frances Simpson] had not been there long when starting out one day, she met a little boy in tatters, with bare legs and cracked feet and asked him his name. “George Simpson” was his reply. Who is your father, was the next query and prompt answer was “*The Governor.*” Convinced she had found a stepson, she took him to the store and dressed him up, then took him to her husband, remarking, “This is a nice smart little boy, and you must send him to school without delay.” Subsequently she found others of the same noble name, a boy and two girls but claiming different mothers.¹⁰⁹

Young George and his brother eventually made their way across the mountains. Once there, George lived with Chief Trader John McLoughlin and his family while attending school at Fort

¹⁰⁸ HBCA B.4/b/1 f 9, Fort Alexander Correspondence Book, 1825-31. John Stuart to George Simpson, 26 May 1831, quoted in Erin Millions, ‘By Education and Conduct’: Educating Trans-Imperial Indigenous Fur-Trade Children in the Hudson Bay’s Company Territories and the British Empire, 1820s to 1870s,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Manitoba, Department of History, 2017, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 85

Vancouver. In one of his letters to the HBC's London Committee, Herbert Beaver who, as has been noted earlier, bore no fondness for the McLoughlins, wrote

nor can I help mentioning an instance of the utter want of it in the person of Mr. Simpson's son, a fine little boy about eight years old, who came with the Express in 1836, clean and decently clothed. He now runs about in appearance like a beggar's child, and at one time suffered so much from sores, brought on entirely by the neglect of Chief Factor McLoughlin's woman, under whose charge he was placed, as to be obliged to be sent to the hospital, where he was mixed with the other inmates, who are generally of the vilest description.¹¹⁰

George Stewart Simpson went on to join the HBC as an “apprentice” in 1841, and in 1845 was promoted to “clerk.” In 1858 he was promoted to chief trader, at which rank he remained until 1862, when he appears to have left the Company's service.¹¹¹ Although Simpson did not cut his Indigenous children out of his webs of relationship, as Wedderburn Colville had done with Robert Wedderburn, when compared with the children from his marriage to Frances Simpson, they lived more at the edges than the centre. Simpson's understandings of race and family both informed the way he imagined and managed his own spider's webs of relationship.

Simpson brought a mix of racial construction, an understanding of networks of relationship, and frank pragmatism to his time as Governor. He knew how to identify, use, and manage webs of relationship to his advantage. In 1836, Daer, now Lord Selkirk, wrote to his mother Wedderburn Douglas that when visiting a post, George Simpson “first has his talk with the chief, then with each of the under trappers, down to the guides and interpreters, and never omits to go and have a

¹¹⁰ Fourth Letter to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, March 19, 1838 in Beaver, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-1838*, 84.

¹¹¹ HBCA Biographical Sheet: “Simpson, George Stewart,” available at https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_docs/hbca/biographical/s/simpson_george-stewart.pdf. Accessed 13 December 2020.

gossip with the old women, so that before the canoe is gummed and in the water again, he is up to everything great and that has happened at the post for a twelvemonth.”¹¹²

The fur trade that emerged after George Simpson’s arrival in 1820 bears many of his marks. Philip Goldring has argued that patronage as a model for hiring in the HBC was not unlike that practiced by the East India Company (EIC), foregrounding the importance of family networks and webs of connection in HBC careers, particularly in the officer ranks, during Simpson’s governorship. Despite the deep cuts that followed Simpson’s execution of Wedderburn Colvile’s retrenching system, three of Simpson’s cousins joined the officers’ ranks of the Company after 1821.¹¹³ Edith Burley has argued that while the retrenching system did not invent the distinction between officer and labouring ranks, it did sharpen and define the boundaries.¹¹⁴ In her essay “*Mix’t Bands of Many Nations*,” Carol Judd notes that, in the labour glut after amalgamation and before 1824, Simpson resisted employing Metis labour arguing that they were “too proud and independent to enter the service; they were also poor risks, being ‘indolent and unsteady...fit, for voyaging.’” When labour shortages loomed in 1825, Simpson pivoted his position and decided to bring in younger “‘halfbreeds from Red River... If brought into the Service at a sufficiently early period of life,’ he rationalized, ‘they will become useful steady Men and taking all things into consideration I think they will be found the cheapest and best servants we can get.’”¹¹⁵

Burley contends that the permeability of the boundary between workers and officers was hardened under the retrenchment plan, that fewer and fewer men from the lower ranks could

¹¹² AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett Excerpts and notes,” extract, 8 Sept 1836, Selkirk to his mother, Jean Countess of Selkirk, Montreal.

¹¹³ Philip Goldring, “Governor Simpson's officers: elite recruitment in a British overseas enterprise, 1834–1870,” *Prairie Forum* (Regina), 10 (1985): 251–81, 254, 256.

¹¹⁴ Edith Burley, “Work, discipline and conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770 to 1870,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Manitoba, Department of History, 1993, 63.

¹¹⁵ Carol M. Judd “*Mix't Bands of Many Nations'*: 1821-70.” In *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, A. Ray and Carol Judd, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), Kindle edition, n.p.

anticipate promotion into the officer classes, exposing the way the retrenchment plan patrolled the boundaries between classes of workers. But race and class could be mutually constitutive. Taken together, the webs of relationship that defined much of the hiring of officers, the work that Wedderburn Colville's retrenching plan, in the hands of George Simpson, did to prevent movement from the lower ranks to the higher ranks, his construction of Metis as limited to the plains and to the chase, and the decreased opportunities some individuals whose families could not send them away for an education might have experienced as Simpson resisted local Indigenous education schemes were all mutually imbricated. As Brown has argued, although "racial or colour bars" may not have become "as codified as in, for example, the Caribbean slave or former slave societies," in the fur trade, "racism certainly became to some extent a pretext for economic exploitation. As in nineteenth-century Cuba, a connection could 'be detected between changing economic needs and intensity of discrimination.'"¹¹⁶ This mutual imbrication of the construction of race and the exploitation of labour can be seen as contributing to Judd's assertion in her essay "Native Labour and Social Stratification" that, following the 1821 amalgamation of the HBC and NWC, "with few exceptions [Indigenous people] gained access only to the lowest levels of the employment hierarchy," a significant change from pre-merger employment statistics.¹¹⁷ Taken in this context, Simpson's push, documented by historians including Sylvia Van Kirk, to encourage his officers to marry White women can be understood as an attempt to keep the networks of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families involved in the fur trade separate, of managing and policing the construction and boundaries of those webs.

Conclusions

Changes in chattel slavery within the British Empire combined with the networks of webs of relationship that connected families and business, that crossed oceans, brought the business, culture, and personal beliefs of a plantation owner and a sugar broker's clerk into the heart of the North American continent. The racialized constructions that travelled this route continued to inform and impact the fur trade long after the physical violence of the fur trade wars had

¹¹⁶ Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 207.

¹¹⁷ Carol M. Judd, 'Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department 1770-1870, *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 17:1, 1980, 305-314, 305.

subsided with the merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821. What followed was a period where symbolic violence in the form of increasingly racial constructions of individuals, a situation where gender and class were often also mutually constitutive, brought new pressure to bear on considerations of freedom and unfreedom. These constructions, which would have been legible to people in other parts of the Empire, limited access to political and economic opportunities based on a calculus that continued to engage gender, class, and especially race.

Conclusions: “Fortune, cunning, and Prudence”¹

The Wedderburn family’s spider’s webs of relationship connected them not only to the violences of the fur trade, but to violences in Scotland, in England, and in the West Indies. Taken as a whole, these interconnected webs of relationship are important pieces in understanding how violence, including unfreedom and slavery, could travel along webs of family and business relationship to cross oceans and manifest in various forms. Connections between the Jacobite Risings, the West Indian sugar/slave trade, and the fur trade in the persons of the Wedderburn family, but also in other fur trade families demonstrate the complexity of the webs of relationship that could travel between these events and places.

From Culloden to the West Indies: The Wedderburn Family’s Paths of Violence through the British Empire

In August of 1808, Jean Wedderburn Douglas, Lady Selkirk wrote to her sister-in-law Lady Katherine Douglas Halkett that “These Wedderburns are so intolerably lucky there is no suffering them.”² While luck may have helped occasionally, as previous chapters show, there was a great deal more to the Wedderburn’s collective success than happenstance. Writing to his sister “Peggy,” Margaret Wedderburn, in December of 1746, Wedderburn Douglas’ father, James Wedderburn (who later added Colvile to his name, although not officially), perhaps summed this up best when he told his sister that the family’s success, in the aftermath of his father’s execution and attainder following the Battle of Culloden, hinged on “fortune, cunning, and Prudence, which 3 things are all necessary to acquire a fortune.”³ As the Wedderburn

¹ Tuesday, Dec. 2, 1746 James Wedderburn to “Miss Peggy Wedderburn at Nivay,” A.H. Millar, “The Wedderburn Book,” *The Scottish Review*, vol 34, 326.

² AO F 481, Thomas Douglas Selkirk fonds, MU4825, Box 1, “Selkirk Additional, J.P. Pritchett. Excerpts and notes,” J.S. [Jean Selkirk] to K. [Lady Katherine Douglas Halkett] St. Mary’s Isle, Aug. 5, 1808.

³ Tuesday, Dec. 2, 1746 James Wedderburn to “Miss Peggy Wedderburn at Nivay,” A.H. Millar, “The Wedderburn Book,” *The Scottish Review*, vol 34, 326.

family's history shows, it is impossible to understand the interventions of the extended Wedderburn family in the sugar and fur trades without understanding their imbrication in colonial violence, including the violence of the Jacobite Risings.

Exactly what part Jean Wedderburn Douglas and Andrew Wedderburn Colvile's grandfather Sir John Wedderburn of Blackness played in the Jacobite Risings that culminated in the Battle of Culloden is subject to some debate. British military documents indicate that he "collected excise in Perth for behoof of the Rebels, carried arms in their army and was at the battle of Culloden, where he was taken prisoner." On the other hand, Wedderburn of Blackness claimed that he "was neither in arms, travelling with any party of the army or having any concerns in it *there*."⁴ In the end, whatever the truth of his participation, what is certain is that Wedderburn of Blackness was taken prisoner by William Augustus, duke of Cumberland's troops following the battle. His imprisonment not only confined him bodily, it restricted his access to the support of family webs of relationship. Soon after he was taken prisoner, Wedderburn of Blackness wrote to his cousin, Thomas Kyd, informing him of his capture, and reaching out not only for financial assistance, but for "Letters of Recommendation," because, he told his cousin, he expected to be moved to Carlisle, "where I shall be without money or acquaintance."⁵

Wedderburn of Blackness' sons James and John were also caught up in the violence of the battle and its aftermath. The barely seventeen-year-old John Wedderburn (later Balindean),⁶ Wedderburn of Blackness' eldest surviving son, had been at the battle but managed to escape capture. His uncle Robert Wedderburn found John refuge with the Reverend William Arthur, minister of Glenisla, and he was able to attend a meeting of the General Assembly disguised as the minister's footman. Wedderburn Ballindean remained in hiding with Reverend Arthur until

⁴ Quoted in Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol. 1, 266.

⁵ John Wedderburn of Blackness to Cousin Thomas Kyd in Leith 27 April 1746, quoted in Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 266.

⁶ The ancestry.com index entry for the marriage record of John Baronet Wedderburn to Alicia Dundas, 26 Dec 1780, gives his birth date as 21 February 1729, Canongate, Edinburgh, Midlothian, Scotland, *Scotland, Select Marriages, 1561-1910* [database on-line]. Canada; *Drouin Collection*; Author: *Gabriel Drouin, comp.* Accessed through Ancestry.com. Accessed 12 December 2020.

October or November 1746, then worked his passage to London on a trading ship. In London he again drew on the family's webs of relationship, living with another of his relatives, Paterson of Carpow. During this time, he may have been able to visit his father who was being held at the Southwark Gaol.⁷

John Wedderburn of Blackness' teenage sons were profoundly impacted by the violences of Culloden and its aftermath. After his father's execution on 28 November, family tradition holds that John Wedderburn (later of Balindean) escaped to America, where he stayed, possibly until the government passed a bill of indemnity in June of 1747. From there he travelled to Jamaica.⁸ While in Jamaica, he established himself as a physician, although there is no evidence that he had any formal training in this field. In 1752 he inherited from a great uncle, which may have aided him in purchasing and developing plantations and buying slaves. In 1763, he returned to Scotland, going back to Jamaica by 1766, then moving back to Scotland permanently in 1768. Once back in Scotland he purchased Balindean. Although his family had lost their title through attainder when Wedderburn of Blackness was found to have taken the Jacobite side, Wedderburn Balindean used, and was sometimes referred to in official documents as, the title of 6th bart. It was not until after his death, however, that the family regained their title officially, when Sir David Wedderburn, his eldest surviving son, was raised to the Baronetcy.⁹ John Wedderburn Balindean is probably best known for his part in the Joseph Knight case. In *Knight v. Wedderburn* (1778), an enslaved man whom Wedderburn Balindean had purchased in Jamaica and brought back to Scotland to work in his home claimed his freedom, arguing that he was free when he set foot in Scotland. Eventually the case made its way to the highest court, which issued an unequivocal decision that Knight was free on Scottish soil.¹⁰

⁷ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 288

⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 288

⁹ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, "John Wedderburn of Balindean," available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146634306>. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

¹⁰ Whitfield, *North to Bondage*, 9.

Although he had not been at the Battle of Culloden with his father and brother John, James Wedderburn was profoundly impacted by it as well. In April of 1746, James Wedderburn was still only sixteen-years old when his father was captured and his brother was placed in hiding following the battle. Too young to have been at the battle itself, he was quickly drawn into its aftermath. As soon as he heard of his father's imprisonment James rode from his home in Scotland to London on his pony, sleeping rough along the way. According to the family genealogist and historian Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn, he "used in after years" to "recall how the noise of the cattle and the anxiety of his errand made it impossible for him to sleep." In a letter to his sister "Peggy," Margaret Wedderburn, sent from Jamaica in February 1747, James Wedderburn Colvile wrote that, once in London, he had spared no effort in trying to find "friends" who might support their father, so he might be spared from being hanged, drawn, and quartered. James Wedderburn Colvile's letter to his sister, recounting his father's last days and his own desperate attempts to save him, especially read alongside his later career in the inexcusably brutal West Indian plantation slavery of this period, is not only a strong reminder of the rippled effects of harm that such violence performs, but of the family's belief in the power of relationship. "Dear Peggy," he began. "Both Mr. Wedderburn and I thought we were as sure of his being saved as any body can be in a case of that nature: from the time of sentence being pass'd I never rested going continually from one friend to another to applie more earnestly to the Great People they were acquainted with," wrote James. Continuing, he described in aching detail the pains he had gone to to try to save their father.¹¹

"There was never a day but I went to General Anstruther's after I heard he was upon the road to importune him but putting all the circumstances together I have great reason to think he never spoke one word in his behalf at court or so faintly as not to be of any use," James told his sister. Reassured a little by his father's outlook, and hoping for the best, "but still as I thought we had so many friends that there was little to be feared so that we had no reason to despair," he told Peggy. "till thursday at 12 o'clock when the reprieves came down and he was not mention'd." It was at this point, James told his sister, that their father "wrote a letter to me with direction about

¹¹ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 305.

his ffuneralls, and some others I spoke off, tooke his leave of me and to entertain some company who had come out of curiosity to see who was to go and who not.” James’ hopes were raised when “we had not sitten long when there came a reprieve for Tho^s Watson which I thought had been the effect of some later solicitations so went and Tooke boat immediately for Mr. Wedderburn’s to advise with him what could be done.” The advice he received was that “nothing more than what had been done already that he knew of” could be done at that point, “but Mrs. Wedderburn and I desired him to wrote a handsome letter to the C-tess of Y-th¹² which I carried to St. James after signing it.” Even then, James knew his errand was futile, “but it was of no purpose for the Servants had got orders to take no letters except from the post I desire you would not tell anybody of this because I did not expect to have any success only that I might have the Satisfaction of haveing tryed everything that could be thought upon,” he wrote.¹³

As James struggled to save his father from a grizzly and humiliating death, the prison had an almost carnival feel. “There is one thing that I always thought would have done in the evenings,” he wrote. And in that milieu, a desperate plan came to his mind. “Especially that before the execution the prison was crowded with people (for they sell liquors as in a publick house) which must of necessity confuse the keepers and I would have him put on Mrs. Kinairds hoop gown and capuchin which I think would have disguised him.” His father declined, “But he said it would be as well to die now as 20 years after and he would not run the risk of being ill used the night before his death and forbid me to trouble my head any more about it.” The morning of Wedderburn of Blackness’ execution, James wrote “next morning at 7 o’clock I cam over when the condemned were not to come from the back prison so I waited with Sandy Kinloch till they should come and he told me that he had been up all night preparing himself.” Sparing his teenage son the responsibility of actually witnessing his hanging and dismemberment, Wedderburn of Blackness told James that “he thought a second parting would be troublesome bringing us all to his memory which he knew was the only thing that pained him and perhaps give an appearance of concern to him which would be explained otherwise by the spectators.” At his father’s insistence, James left “before he came from prison I need not tell you that he died in such a

¹² Probably the King’s mistress, the Countess of Yarmouth.

¹³ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 305.

manner as to confirm all those who had conversed with since he came to London in their opinion of his sense, resolution, and integrity which will always make them ready to assist us when we go abroad in the world,” he told his sister.¹⁴ James Wedderburn Colvile would never be the same. Alexander Dundas Ogilvy Wedderburn wrote that “The recollection of his father’s fate never left him, and till the end of his life he would, when in London or its neighbourhood, make any detour to avoid the scenes connected with that event.”¹⁵

The path that James Wedderburn Colvile took from his father’s execution to the plantations of Jamaica is not entirely clear. In a letter to Peggy in December of 1746, he still seems to have been in Britain, as he noted that his father wanted his night gown sent to Jamaica, but that he should keep some stockings and nightcaps for himself. “P.S. _ You must excuse this bad write for my master cannot spare me any longer in town, as his nephew is embarked yesterday. I saw the body decently interred beside two of Mr. Crawford’s brothers in St. George’s Churchyard, Southwark,” he added.¹⁶ By the time he wrote a letter to Peggy in Jamaica in February 1747, James Wedderburn Colvile must have been working for someone there, as he closed his account with a request that Peggy “send David Miller’s fowling piece which I design to make a present to my master being very much obliged to him and likely to be more; it would be very acceptable to him both because of the owner and as he delights much in fowling.”¹⁷ Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, James Wedderburn Colvile’s son, stated that he believed his father had travelled to Jamaica about 1749-1750.¹⁸

As had his brother John Wedderburn Balindean, James Wedderburn Colvile at some point began to practice medicine in Jamaica. By 1763 he and John had been joined by their brothers Peter and Alexander, the family network was moving toward the West Indies, and he was as a “practitioner

¹⁴ Letter, Jamaica, 2 Feb 1747, Quoted in Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 280- 281, 280.

¹⁵ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 305.

¹⁶ A.H. Millar, “The Wedderburn Book,” *The Scottish Review*, vol 34, 327.

¹⁷ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 305.

¹⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 2, 144.

of physick and chirurgery.”¹⁹ The names “Dr. James Wedderburn” and “Dr. Wedderburn” appear frequently in the 1760s in the diaries of Thomas Thistlewood, a West Indian planter and slave owner. These diaries offer a rare opportunity to see a primary source created by a slave owner during this period of history in Jamaica. In Thistlewood’s diaries, which have largely been digitized and can be found online, as well as Douglas Hall’s *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86*, which transcribes and paraphrases from these diaries, Dr. Wedderburn, almost certainly James, appears to have been providing medical care and advice for Thistlewood’s slaves, as well as sending medicines when requested.²⁰ It is quite possible that his practice was connected in this way with the early Websters’ firm “Messrs. Webster, druggists” mentioned above.²¹ Wedderburn may also have been operating some sort of small hospital, as Thistlewood sent several of his slaves to stay with Wedderburn when they were ill. “Went to Dr. James Wedderburn by [?] rec^d Med. For [?]: Neg;,”²² Thistlewood wrote on the 30th of October 1765. On the 3rd of February 1764, Thistlewood wrote that “Last Night Mulatto John has the Fever Violently and was so bad that I did not think he could have livd till Morning,” then “Note from Dr. James Wedderburn p^r Neptune & Some Cooling powders for John,” then “Wrote to Dr. Wedderburn p^r Prince, whom I sent on my horse, but [ye?:] doctor not at home.”²³ In late July, 1767, Thistlewood wrote that one of his slaves, Will, was “Sick at Dr. Wedderburn’s, Maria

¹⁹ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 305.

²⁰ Douglas Hall and Thomas Thistlewood, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1999).

²¹ See for example: Thomas Thistlewood Papers, at the Beinecke Library, OSB MSS 176. See particularly, for example, entries for (available online as noted) 1764 February 2nd, 3rd at <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11999374>; Friday 24th Augst 1764, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11999561>; Sunday 14th October 1764, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11999602>; Monday, 15th October, 1764, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11999603>; 3 October 1769, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11882550>; 12 October 1767, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11882312>; 18 October 1769, <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11882560>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

²² Thistlewood Diary, 1765, 30th October 1765, available at <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/12015035>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

²³ Thistlewood Diary, 1764, 3 February 1764, available at <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11999375>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

attending him.”²⁴ On August 7th 1767, “Maria Came home from Dr. Wedderburn’s and acquainted me Will died about breakfast time this Morning. I sent Cudjoe & John to bury him.”²⁵

In addition to his medical practice, James Wedderburn Colvile became wealthy purchasing land and slaves and operating plantations in Jamaica. He left the West Indies to live permanently in Scotland in 1773, but he did not leave alone.²⁶ In his book *The Horrors of Slavery* Robert Wedderburn noted that he was not the only child of James Wedderburn Colvile born in Jamaica during James Wedderburn’s time as a planter and physician there. “My mother had, previously to my birth, borne two other sons to James Wedderburn, Esq. of Invernesk, Slave-Dealer, one of whom, a mill-wright, works now upon the family estate in Jamaica, and has done his whole lifetime,” Robert Wedderburn told his readers. “Perhaps *my dear brother* [Andrew Wedderburn Colvile] knows nothing of one Esther Trotter, a free tawny, who bore my father two children, a boy and a girl, and which children my inhuman father *transported to Scotland*, to gratify his malice, because their mother refused to be any longer the object of his lust, and because she claimed support for herself and offspring? Those children *my dear and loving brother* knows under the name of Graham, being brought up in the same house with them at Inveresk.”²⁷

Lydia Graham was certainly known to Andrew Wedderburn Colvile. James Wedderburn Colvile died on the 14th of December 1807, at Inveresk Lodge, the home in Scotland he had purchased in 1774 around the time as his marriage to Isabella Blackburn or Colvile.²⁸ In his will and subsequent codicils written between July 1802 and November 1807, he consistently made

²⁴ Thistlewood Diary, 1767, Monday 27th July 1767, available at <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11882255>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

²⁵ Thistlewood Diary, 1767, August 7th 1767, available at <https://brbl-zoom.library.yale.edu/viewer/11882265>. Accessed 13 December 2020.

²⁶ Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, “James Wedderburn Colvile,” available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643501>; Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book* vol 2, 144.

²⁷ Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery; Exemplified in the Life ... of ... R. W. ... in which is Included the Correspondence of ... R. W. and His Brother A. Colville, Alias Wedderburn*, Etc,(London, 1824), 22.

²⁸ Wedderburn, *The Wedderburn Book*, vol 1, 305-306.

provision for his “natural or reputed” daughter Lydia Graham, whom he identified as “lately residing with me now spouse to Thomas Stevenson Grocer in Mussleburgh.” The annuity he bequeathed her, a relatively modest 20 pounds per year, he specified was to be paid during her life, “for her own separate use and behoof and shall no ways be liable to the Debts or Deeds or affectable by the diligence of the Creditors of her said Husband or any other whom she may hereafter Marry.”²⁹ There is no mention of a male Graham in James Wedderburn Colvile’s will, so it is not clear what became of the boy, but Lydia Graham is almost certainly the Lydia Graham who married Thomas Stephenson on the 6th of May 1788.³⁰ Jean Wedderburn Douglas would have been only about two years old when Lydia Graham Stephenson married, but her brother Andrew Wedderburn Colvile would have been almost nine.³¹

In his book *The Horrors of Slavery...* Robert Wedderburn described James Wedderburn Colvile as particularly violent. His mother’s situation had at one point become so difficult that “my uncle, Sir John Wedderburn, my father’s elder brother, had given my mother an asylum in his house, against the brutal treatment of my father,” he wrote. In another passage, Robert Wedderburn noted that “I must state that Andrew Colvile’s elder brother [James], who is now dead, when he came over to Jamaica, acknowledged his father’s tawny children, and, amongst them, my brothers as his brothers. He once invited them all to a dinner, and behaved very free and familiar to them.” Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, by contrast, Robert Wedderburn framed as carrying many of his father’s worst traits. “I could expatiate at great length on the inhumanity

²⁹ The National Archives (England), England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858 for James Wedderburn Colvile, PROB 11: Will Registers, 1808-1810, Piece 1477: Ely, Quire Numbers 267-319 (1808).

³⁰ National Records of Scotland, Scotland’s People, (Old Parish Registers Marriages 689/ 130 12 Inveresk and Musselburgh), 06/05/1788 STEPHENSON, THOMAS, 12 of 368.

³¹ 3rd May 1786, Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, Lady Jean Selkirk (née Wedderburn) available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146643561>. Accessed 13 December 2020; 6th Nov 1779 Legacies of British Slave-Ownership, Andrew Colvile, available at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/24188>. Accessed on 13 December 2020.

and cruelty of the West-India planters, were I not fearful that I should become wearisome on so notorious a subject. My brother, Andrew Colvile, is a tolerable specimen of them,” he wrote.³²

The issues that James Wedderburn Colvile’s life, as well as that of his extended family raises, the violences that he both experienced and perpetrated, and the culture of violence that this brief survey of his life exemplifies shine a small light on the often shape-shifter-like characteristics that imperial violence could embrace. Violence could be expressed in the act of hanging, drawing, and quartering, or of the inexcusable violences of enslavement, of non-consensual sexual relations, of harms done to mothers whose children could be snatched from them at any time. It could appear in the form of spotty and inconsistent record keeping, or in name changes that could erase history and relationships. It could be expressed and experienced in physical violence, or in the symbolic violence that underwrote these systems of imperial violence. Travelling along the networks of relationship that spanned the imperial world, webs along which its perpetrators moved both literally and figuratively, this violence, in its many forms, could be transmitted through relationships of trust. It could travel from one generation to the next, it could reach from Britain to Africa to the West Indies, it could travel from Scotland to Jamaica, and back to Scotland. Or it could move along any number of spider’s webs of relationship from Scotland to North America.

From Culloden to the Fur Trade

The ascendancy of Scottish fur traders in Quebec after 1760 was itself predicated on imperial violences related to the acquisition of land that travelled from the Seven Years War in Europe to North America, and resulting in the Treaty of Paris in 1763 in which France surrendered New France to Great Britain. Other colonial violences played a part as well. In his 1968 book *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, William Stewart Wallace noted that many fur traders in Quebec under British rule “were Scottish Highlanders, the sons of those who had come to Canada in Wolfe’s army or as United Empire Loyalists in the American Revolution.” Many, wrote Wallace, had connections to the Jacobite cause. “The numerous Frasers, McTavishes and McGillivrays, who played such an important part in the history of the North West Company,

³² Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery*, 9, 24.

nearly all came from Lord Lovat's estates. The names of the North West Company partners sound like a roll call of the clans at Culloden,” stated Wallace.³³

Simon McTavish, who married Marie-Marguerite Chaboillez, as already noted, owned at least one slave, Jacques, a “panis,” or Indigenous slave. To Wallace’s list can be added fur trader William Grant, whom Trudel identifies as having 8 Black slaves.³⁴ “These men were hardy, courageous, shrewd, and proud,” wrote Wallace. Eighty years earlier, George Bryce had evoked a similar image of Jacobite refugee fur traders writing that “Beyond the Rocky Mountains, this enterprising company [The Northwest Company],” united “in the perseverance of its hardy Scottish leaders (many of them Jacobite refugees to Canada, or their descendants) with the love of adventure of their French Canadian *voyageurs*.”³⁵ In *The Scotsman in Canada*, Bryce again managed to describe this flavour of adventure, which somehow romanticized a tendency to violence into something colourful. “Simon Fraser was a true Celt, quick-tempered, impulsive, and possibly overbearing. He was a man of intrepid spirit.... He was of the Jacobite immigration to the United States,” wrote Bryce.³⁶ In the hands of earlier authors, the mystique of violence such as that of the Jacobite Risings was shaped into a romantic backstory for the Canadian fur trade, yet as has already been seen, the period of the Risings was traumatic, and led to diaspora and disconnection for many families. As Marianne McLean notes in *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820*, “The precise implications for Highland development of

³³ Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 35.

³⁴ David Roberts, “GRANT, WILLIAM (1744-1805),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 23, 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/grant_william_1744_1805_5E.html; Dictionnaire Trudel 339-340, 379.

³⁵ George Bryce “A Plea for a Canadian Camden Society,” *Délibérations Et Mémoires de la Société Royale Du Canada, Royal Society of Canada*, 1885, 47.

³⁶ George Bryce, *The Scotsman in Canada: Western Canada, including Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and portions of old Rupert's Land and the Indian territories* (Toronto: Musson Book Co, [1911]), 73.

the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 might be up for debate, but not the severe reprisals that immediately followed the revolt.”³⁷

The complex webs of relationship that connected the “Pedlars from Montreal” could also connect their experiences of violence and displacement. In her book *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest*, Marjorie Wilkins Campbell described the family stories of the Battle of Culloden that fur trader William McGillivray grew up listening to. “To young Will and his brothers and sisters,” wrote Campbell, “the chieftan who captained the Clan Chattan Regiment and the time of the first Jacobite Rising in 1715 might have been an uncle, so familiar were they” with his exploits. “His son and heir,” she continues, “who led the same regiment in support of Prince Charles at Culloden was even closer to them.” As Campbell notes, these were family stories, passed from parent to child, “repeated a hundred times over to keep alive the memory of the gallant defenders and to pass away long evenings.”³⁸ When the fur trader Thomas Fraser died at Fort Abitibi in January of 1849, he gave fellow trader “James Cameron the dirk his father carried at Culloden,” writes Elaine Mitchell.³⁹

None of this can excuse the inexcusable violences, including the chattel slavery, that travelled along these webs. These violences did not travel, nor did they erupt, passively or somehow organically. They, like the webs themselves, were the work of human agency. Rather, it is to show that the fur trade in Northern North America was not an isolated bubble of exceptionalism that somehow, perhaps because of its unique economic dependence on Indigenous people as partners, as diplomats, geographers, cartographers, guides, and linguists, and as independent suppliers, avoided imperial violence. Just as the makeup and culture of the fur traders themselves was influenced and informed by territorial conflicts that may have begun in Europe, but which spread to North America, the violence of chattel slavery existed and persisted in what would become Canada, and in the fur trade of that region. Looking at the webs of relationship that

³⁷ Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 19.

³⁸ Wilkins Campbell, *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest*, 12-13.

³⁹ Mitchell, *Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade*, Kindle Edition, n.p.

existed, supported, and informed the fur trade in northern North America from the fur trade of New France, through the changes that took place after 1760, and imbricated in the upper echelons of the HBC, this does not seem so remarkable. Fur traders based in the east, in Detroit, in Michilimackinac, and in Montreal bought, owned, and sold chattel slaves. These slaves, whether Black or Indigenous, as chattel slavery rested on a racialized construction of some groups as susceptible to enslavement, could be used to perform literal work for their owners. Or they could be used to generate wealth as security for loans, as an investment that could increase in value in resale, or as a way of recouping a debt. They were as much an integral part of the economy of the fur trade as they were of the French and British empires these fur traders were imbedded in and connected to.

Conclusions

It can be no surprise then, that fur trade chattel slavery did not occur only in and around communities in the east. As White fur traders with their webs of connection which stretched over large parts of the British and French empires moved inland, further and further into the pays d'en haut, they brought their slaves, their desire to purchase more slaves to fill a market closer to home, and their racialized understandings of freedom and unfreedom with them. In the written decision of the famous case of *Connolly v. Woolrich* (1867), the courts in Canada reasoned that, in the matter of the validity of fur trade marriages, it was not reasonable to suppose that the fur trader William Connolly could “carry with him this common law of England to Rat River in his knapsack.”⁴⁰ And yet, when it came to chattel slavery, this was exactly what the fur trade did, it carried not only chattel slaves into and out of the pays d'en haut, but the racialized logic, the culture of colonial violence and beliefs in colonial law that supported the symbolic and physical violences chattel slavery involved.

Neither was the HBC an exception to this. From its beginning, and from the pinnacle of its hierarchical structure, the HBC, its Governors and major investors were mutually imbricated in the “gentlemanly capital” that fueled and informed not only the HBC, but the Lords and Proprietors of the Carolinas, and the Royal Africa Company. Although this study has focused on

⁴⁰ Quoted in Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 103.

these two entities particularly, there are other connections, for instance with the East India Company, that bear scrutiny as well. Just as with the eastern fur traders, these Companies depended on webs of relationship that engaged not only business but family connections. And just as with the eastern fur traders, these webs, while gendered, were places where women as well as men could participate in their creation and maintenance. In the operations of the HBC in what would become Canada, just as in the operations of the eastern fur traders, slavery and slaves, including female slaves, could perform physical labour but could also extend networks and support trade. The purchase and sale of enslaved people could also enhance a fur trader's personal finances, as the case of James Knight demonstrates.

In the case of both the HBC and of eastern fur trading firms, the webs of relationship that connected businesses, families, and commercial opportunities could reach across oceans. Fur trading families like the Ellices and Phyns could diversify both individually and corporately, by engaging in plantation slavery and the West Indian slave economy, while families embedded in the West Indian slave economy could, and did, move into the fur trade, as the case of the Wedderburn family clearly demonstrates. This movement was not accidental, as Draper argues in *Legacies of Slave Ownership*, it occurred in the context of concerns by West Indian planters over the potential impacts of abolitionist movements and anti-slavery legislation, and it brought its own opportunities for the values of empire to be carried into the pays d'en haut in various knapsacks.⁴¹

The extended and extendable network of the Wedderburn family and its business relationships offers an opportunity to see not only the importance of relationships, and the gendered but not exclusive interventions that women could make in the formation and operation of these networks to improve family fortunes. The Wedderburn family, with their connections to the Douglas and Montgomery families, to colonization schemes, and to the imperial violences of the Jacobite Risings, plantation slavery, and the later racialized (as well as class and gender-informed) symbolic violence of the Red River Settlement, offer an important glimpse into how colonial

⁴¹ Draper, "Possessing People," in Catherine Hall, et. al. 688., *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*, 61.

violence over territory and racialized ideas about unfreedom could not only co-exist but could interconnect.

As already noted, Carlos has argued that the HBC's official interventions into fur trade violence began around 1809-1810. Perhaps it is on coincidence that, as Tolly Bradford has noted in his article "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System' of the Hudson's Bay Company," it was on the 2nd of January 1810, that Andrew Wedderburn (later Colvile) "a Scottish merchant based in the City of London, with extensive links to the Jamaican sugar plantations, purchased shares in the Hudson's Bay Company." Soon after his purchase of stock in the HBC Wedderburn presented a plan, a "Retrenching," or "New" system that he argued would regenerate the Company's failing fortunes and restore the fur trade as a profitable focus for its business enterprises. This plan, argues Bradford, was based largely on Andrew Wedderburn Colvile's own lifetime of experiences in the world of sugar plantations and the sugar trade. With the Jamaican plantation system as an "inspiration – if not a blueprint – for Wedderburn's plan for the reorganization of the HBC in the 1810s," Bradford argues that the HBC was "reinvigorated in the 1810s partly due to its connections – through the Wedderburns – to the wider Atlantic World and the sugar-slave commerce of the West Indies in particular."⁴²

But the Wedderburns, through their connections with the British Empire, with territorial violence, and with the Atlantic World - including the violence of sugar and slave commerce - brought in more than a new business model. The interventions of the extended Wedderburn family and their webs of networks of relationships retrenched violence and unfreedom in the fur trade. Some of the results of the Wedderburns' interventions can be seen in the officially sanctioned violence Carlos has tracked. Other aspects of their interventions are legible in the language used around the troubles at Red River. As Red River Settlement-related violence flared, it became increasingly important to the HBC and to Red River Settlement interests that they skate around the issues that Aboriginal Title, as recognized in the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, raised. In June of 1819, representatives for the North West Company argued before the British Parliament that "It is absurd to consider [the Metis at Red River] in any other light than as

⁴² Bradford, "Jamaica, the Atlantic World, and the 'New System'," 12-13.

Indians; the British law admits of no filiation of illegitimate children but that of the mother.”⁴³ In rejoinder, in a speech on the 24th of June, 1819, Sir James Montgomery, brother-in-law to the Selkirks, told the House of Commons that “The North-West Company... had recourse to the assistance of a different race of beings, _ the half-breed Indians, or, as they are usually called, Metifs, or Bois-brulés. – These are for the most part the illegitimate offspring of the wintering partners, clerks, and servants of the North-West Company, by Indian women.”⁴⁴ John Halkett, another brother-in-law, had used similar language in his *Statement respecting the Earl of Selkirk's settlement of Kildonan upon the Red River*. It had been “rumoured that formal petition had been presented to Government in behalf of these illegitimate Bois-Brulés as “lords of the soil!” If they have done so, it doubtless must be by right of *conquest*, as even Mr. McGillivray will scarcely contend that they hold the lands by right of *inheritance*,” he wrote in 1817.⁴⁵ Tellingly, this framing of the rights of the Métis did not avoid race, rather it hung on “legitimacy” and the inheritance of race through the father or mother.

That the racialized, patriarchal, and hierarchical construction of the Red River Settlement after the death of Lord Selkirk, and especially following the arrival of George Simpson would be completely legible to people in other parts of the British Empire, but especially to those familiar with slave economies is no coincidence. Spatially located within the Settlement but connected by

⁴³ Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Papers relating to the Red River settlement, viz., Return to an address from the Honourable House of Commons to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, dated 24th June, 1819, for copies or extracts of the official communications which may have taken place between the Secretary of State and the provincial government of Upper or Lower Canada, relative to the destruction of the settlement of the Red River, to any legal proceedings thereon in the courts of Upper or Lower Canada, or to any complaints made of those proceedings by Lord Selkirk, or the agents of the Hudson's Bay or the North-West companies: Also for copies or extracts of the reports made by the Commissioners of special inquiry appointed to inquire into the offences committed in the Indian Territory, so far as the same can be made public without prejudice to the public service, or to judicial proceedings now pending in Canada: Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 12 July 1819.* [London: 1819], 140.

⁴⁴ Sir James Montgomery, *Substance of the speech of Sir James Montgomery, bart., in the House of Commons on the 24th of June, 1819, on bringing forward his motion relative to the petition of Mr. John Pritchard, of Red River settlement.* (London: Printed by J. Brettell, 1819).

⁴⁵ John Halkett, *Statement respecting the Earl of Selkirk's settlement of Kildonan upon the Red River in North America: Its destruction in the years 1815 and 1816, and the massacre of Governor Semple and his party* (London: Printed by J. Brettell, 1817).

networks of relationship to a hierarchy in Great Britain, the “regularity” and “civilization” that the Buffalo Wool Company was structured on connected with the larger story of the British Empire during this period. Empire was both led and validated through its racialized structure of leadership that was performed by White men who were constructed on the same model as Captain Cook. Leadership was benevolent, but unmistakably patriarchal, male and White. Women, children, and Indigenous people were constructed as not only lower on the hierarchy, but also as needing more leadership, more supervision, in order to perform their part in the imperial project and in civilization.

In this environment, George Simpson found himself caught between the direction of his superiors, who saw the HBC’s support for the missionizing and education of Indigenous people, the imperial requirement to uplift Indigenous people, as essential to their continued control of the Northern North American fur trade, and his own beliefs that were informed not only by the general tenor of the language of imperialism, with its increasing sexism, classism, and racism, but by his personal experiences working in the sugar brokerage industry, an industry and culture that was connected to and deeply dependant on, West Indian plantation slavery. It was, then, no coincidence, that Simpson constructed non-Whites as living geographically and temperamentally outside of the Settlement, outside of civilization. Simpson’s racially constructed categories identified Indigenous people with these geographies and with certain types of labour that would have been familiar to the sugar brokers and plantation owners he had worked with his entire adult life. But so too would his construction of non-Whites as a potential threat to the settlement, a threat to civilization.

Slave revolts were an ongoing facet of slave society in the West Indies. In Jamaica, during James Wedderburn Colvile’s time, revolts, and rumours of revolts were common. In his article "Slave Revolts, Royal Justice, and a Ubiquitous Rumor in the Age of Revolutions," Wim Klooster argues that revolts in the Caribbean in the early nineteenth century occurred in the contexts of rumours about imminent emancipation and the worries of people living in the age of revolution.⁴⁶ Simpson’s use of symbolic violence, of framing non-Whites as not only outside of

⁴⁶ Hall and Thistlewood, *In Miserable Slavery*; Wim Klooster,

civilization, but as dangerous to it, was a characterization that deviated from the idea of the British Empire, possibly through the introduction of missionaries and through education, working collectively with Indigenous people while offering uplift. Simpson's ideas not only fit with the culture he was coming from, they would have been familiar and legible to his own masters in England, and especially to Andrew Wedderburn Colvile.

Simpson's genius was his ability to find a way to frame his characterization of Indigenous people as peoples in need of direction and control not by the missionaries and teachers the Company suggested, but rather by the Company's officers, and under his direction. The creation of an Anglican agricultural mission at St. Peter's was a danger not only because educated Indigenous people were inevitably ever after "good for nothing," but because as an agricultural community on the edge of the settlement, they posed a danger to the good order of the Colony, they posed a threat to the spark of civilization the Company was trying to fan into life at the Red River Settlement.⁴⁷ "The Freemen and half-breed population" were becoming "very formidable in point of numbers." With the impending changes civilization, in this case in the form of domesticated cattle, would bring, this group could not help but become more dangerous as their sole livelihood, the hunt, would become redundant. Under the leadership of George Simpson, whose Governorship drew directly on his connection to the Wedderburn family's webs of relationship, changes within the British Empire, and especially the plantation sugar-slave trade that grew with the approaching end of legal chattel slavery travelled along the Wedderburn family's webs of relationship. These changes resulted not only in the retrenching and

"Slave Revolts, Royal Justice, and a Ubiquitous Rumor in the Age of Revolutions." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2014): 401-24. Accessed November 24, 2020. doi:10.5309/willmaryquar.71.3.0401.

⁴⁷ LAC Selkirk Papers, f 7587 20 May 1822, Simpson to Colvile, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/983?r=0&s=3. Accessed on 13 December 2020; 20th May 1822, Simpson to Colvile, Red River, Fort Garry, letter begins f 7587, available at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/983?r=0&s=3, see particularly F 7600 at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/996?r=0&s=3, and private remarks f 7605 at https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c7/996?r=0&s=3. All accessed 13 December 2020; Budd and Pettipas, *The Diary of the Reverend Henry Budd* x-xi.

reinvigorating of the HBC as a business, but also in the retrenching of racialized tensions, and a reframing, albeit still a racialized one, of degrees of freedom and unfreedom.

In an essay titled “Partial Truths: A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriage,” Brown reflects that “Our understandings of ‘marriage according to the custom of the country’ . . . are partial in two senses of the word: they are both incomplete and biased.” The same is true of our understandings of the complex webs of relationship that influenced, informed, and in some cases animated violences in the fur trade. “The source materials are never as complete as we would wish for the distant, other worlds of the fur trade,” writes Brown. “And just as partiality, in the sense of interest, conditions our sources, so too it affects our outlooks in both constructive and limiting ways.”⁴⁸ Much of this research has focused on what were clearly elite families. This reflects in large part the truth that these were the class of society most likely to have left a record - a narrative of their own construction - behind. Just as with absences in the records of enslaved people, this is not accidental nor neutral. However, glimpses of people like Robert Wedderburn and the men who returned to Brandon House from the Mandan Villages with eight slaves, as well as the voyageurs Trudel has identified and the labourer slave-owners at Fort Vancouver emphasize the fact that colonial violence, including chattel slavery was not the exclusive realm of the powerful or wealthy. While records of common people, the tripmen and engagés, the labourers of the fur trade, are less robust than those left by their masters, the records that have survived show that they, too, participated in the buying and selling of human beings. While more research is needed to understand how constructions of status might have impacted or been impacted by expressions of colonial violence, including slavery, in the fur trade, both the spider’s webs of relationships and the acting out of colonial violences were not the sole purview of the elite.

As important as our tools, our records may be, Brown’s second point, that what we see is shaped by who we are, is shaped by our own narratives, must also be addressed. Despite all of its history, the historiography of freedom and unfreedom in the Canadian fur trade remains focused on the image of Canada and pre-Canada as a place of relatively benign relationships between

⁴⁸ Brown, *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert’s Land*, 104.

colonizer and Indigenous peoples, of cooperative venture, and of refuge from slavery. Read through the lens of narrative theory, the construction and persistence of the imperial and national narratives that frame these encounters as benign and Canada as exceptional do not represent a structuralist recounting of “fact,” nor is how these stories have been constructed accidental. Gaps in the colonial archive, which Adele Perry has argued “are not neutral, voluntary, or strictly literal. They are... silences born of and perpetuated by violence and radical inequality” are implicated, but larger considerations of the enduring imprint of empire on how history is produced need to be addressed.⁴⁹ In this context, as Eric Ketelaar has argued, even the construction of the archive itself can be understood as narrative. “The technologies of records creation, maintenance and use color the contents of the record, and also affect its form and structure,” writes Ketelaar, noting that “Numerous tacit narratives are hidden in categorization, codification and labeling.”⁵⁰ What is recorded and not recorded, what is kept and not kept, but also the ways that archives are arranged and described are, in fact narrative, and as such are located in the narratives of their creators. As Wilson has argued, from the later 1700s forward, the British Empire constructed a narrative of itself as benign. In this narrative, the relationship of the Empire to Indigenous peoples was that of benevolent father. In the same vein, Richard Chan Smith has shown that the story of the relationship between the HBC and Indigenous people was deliberately constructed as one of mutual cooperation, that it was cooperation which brought together British mercantile interests “with Indigenous suppliers in amity.”⁵¹ In this context, while the publication of the story of Thanadelthur’s escape from slavery and the perils of the wilderness to the safety and the civilization of York Factory is not surprising, the way that it is framed reveals the way that this popular story of Thanadelthur as Knight’s willing helper privileges several colonial narrative threads over the narrative Curtis attributed to the Dene he had spoken with. That there are many other stories of unfreedom that have not been taken up, or

⁴⁹ Adele Perry, “The colonial Archive on Trial,” 345.

⁵⁰ Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit narratives: the meanings of archives,” *Archival science* 1 (2), 131-141, 135.

⁵¹ David Chan Smith, "The Hudson's Bay Company, Social Legitimacy, and the Political Economy of Eighteenth-Century Empire." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2018): 71-108, 108. muse.jhu.edu/article/684978.

that have been taken up only through a colonial narrative lens presents an opportunity to meaningfully disconnect from an imperial historiography that has so far avoided an important part of Canada's history.

Appendix A: Descriptions of Joseph Lewis in Fur Trade Records

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
17 Decem ber 1795	Cumberland House	“a mulatto”	HBCA B.49/a/27a, Cumberland House Journal, 1795 – 1796. http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M39/B49-A-27A.pdf	George Sutherland	“This day Joseph Lewis a mulatto who had left his Canadian Employer came here and expressed a wish to enter into your Honours Service but I will not agree at present he seems well calculated for the Employ and far preferable to any Canadian whatever as he says he is under no agreement with his former employers I will certainly engage him if I can as he is capable of steering a canoe or any other duty required.”

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
22 Decem ber 1795	Cumberland House	“a mullatto”	HBCA B.49/a/27a, Cumberland House Journal, 1795-1796. http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M39/B49-A-27A.pdf	George Sutherland to Mr. Bird	Letter carried by Lewes. Notes that Lewis had come into the country with one of the New Canadian Company who had built a house at Pasquia, but a misunderstanding had taken place between Lewes and his Master, had left him, might join the HBC, but had not yet agreed.

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
31 May 1796	Cumberland House	“the Mullato”	<p>HBCA B.239/b/59, York Factory correspondence book, 1796- 1797</p> <p>http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M256/B239-B-59.pdf</p> <p>B.49/a/27B, Cumberland House Journal, 1796-1797.</p> <p>http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M39/B49-A-27B.pdf</p>	Peter Fidler	Lewes arrives to work, wages to commence this day.

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
4 June 1796	Grand Rapids [probably of the Assiniboine River]	“his Negro” [Beaubien]	HBCA B.239/b/57 York Factory correspondence book, 1795 - 1796 http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M256/B239-B-57.pdf	Messrs. Shaw, Finlay, [William?] McKay [opposition to HBC/NWCo] to Mr. Sutherland	Notes that they have taken 2 men who had deserted the HBC to the Grand Rapids, as they would have been taken by Beaubien in retaliation for the loss of “his Negro” had they not.
2 July 1796	HBC contract (York Factory?)	[Query: “Mulatto?”]	HBCA Biographies, “Lewis, Margaret or Lewes.” See also: A.30/8 f 36 (alias Levy Johnson)		Other sources suggest the term might not appear in this contract? On the 2nd of July 1796, a contract was signed (X) by Joseph Lewis alias Levy Johnson of Manchester, New England as a Steersman for a period of three years at £20 per annum. Witnesses were

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
					<p>Joseph Colen, George Sutherland, and Robert Longmoor. The following notes accompany the contract: “This person belonged to one of the New Canadian Companies from Canada; offered his services to Mr. Sutherland on June 1st. He conducted a canoe from Cumberland House, and is considered an excellent Steersman; a sober and steady man.”</p>
1796	Cumberland House? List is for Cumberland, Neppewan, Buckingham, and Edmonton	“a black”	<p>HBCA B.49/f/2, Cumberland House lists of servants, 1796</p> <p>http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%</p>	[?]	<p>“Lewis Joseph... from Canada has left his Canadian master and is gone down steersman to York Factory to engage in your Honours Service, he speaks tolerable good English and came to the House the last day of May he</p>

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
			20Microfilm/1M784/B49-F-2.pdf		is a black but whether he was a Slave or a hired servant I do not know of how fare he may be Depended upon I will not venture to say, but by what I have heard since he embarked he is very much in Debt.”
10 May 1797	Fort Augustus	“the Negro”	HBCA B.239/b/59, York Factory correspondence book, 1796-1797 http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M256/B239-B-59.pdf	" From A.[ngus] Shaw to J.C. [Joseph Colen?] Fort Augustus 10th May 97	Referencing 1796 letter from Grand Rapids, holding onto Ward until “Duroche & the Negro are restored by you.”
20 July 1797	York Factory	“the Negro”	HBCA B.239/b/59, York Factory	J.C. [Joseph Colen?] to Mr Shaw	Also states: “In this wish we perfectly agree but you well know this

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
			<p>correspondence book, 1796-1797</p> <p>http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M256/B239-B-59.pdf</p>		<p>Man was a deserter from one of those interlopers when I engaged him & it cannot be supposed that altho you have purchased the Goods of those Traders that this man also is your property. I hope you do not consider the human Species as articles of Traffic. especially in this free Country humanity forbids it</p>
<p>20 August 1797</p>	<p>Jack River</p>	<p>“a Negro man”</p>	<p>HBCA B.3/a/100, Albany Post Journal, 1796 – 1798</p> <p>http://pam.minisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA%20Microfilm/1M9/B3-A-100.pdf</p>	<p>Donald McKay</p>	<p>...five men & a Negro man from Canada</p>

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
Not dated	Not identified	“Canadian of Colour”	Alice Johnson, introduction, <i>Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence</i>	Not identified	Johnson notes he is referred to as a “Canadian of Colour,” but does not give specifics or references. Need to follow up on this.
Ca 1820 to 1826	Register Book of Wills...				Named as Joseph Lewis [not Levi Johnson] in the index
Ca 1830 Letter 29 July 1830	Red River	American	Church Missionary Society: Church Missionary Society, Mission Book, North-West Canada, 1822-1834, University of Birmingham Library, digitized by Adam Matthew Digital, Letter, Rev William Cockran to the Secretaries,	Rev William Cockran to the Secretaries, CMS	In a list of children at Cockran’s school, Mary Lewis’ father is identified as “American.”

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
			Grand Rapids, Red River Settlement, July 29 th 1830, f 405		
Ca 1831; also earlier references	Red River Settlement	Negro	<p>HBCA Biographies, “Lewis, Margaret or Lewes”.</p> <p>References here to E.4/1b; A.30/8 f 36 (alias Levy Johnson) ; <a 248="" 569="" 695="" 900"="" href="http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA/Extracts%20from%20registers%20of%20baptisms,%20marriages/Extracts%20from%20registers%20of%20baptisms%20in%20Rupert's%20Land/HBCA%20E-4-</p> </td> <td data-bbox=">HBCA/HBC/ William Cockran/CM S</p>	<p>This biography notes Margaret Lewis is identified as a “Negro Half-Breed” in the HBCA copy of Red River marriages register, however, this notation does not appear in the copy held by the Anglican Archives. (HBCA E.4/1b, f 221) Her sister Mary’s 1831 marriage record does not mention race at all.</p> <p>See: HBCAE.4/1b, extracts from register of baptisms and marriages in Rupert’s Land</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/Access/HBCA/Extracts%20from%20registers</p>	

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
			1b/HBCA%20E-4-1b-%20fo-221.jpg		%20of%20baptisms,%20marriages/Extracts%20from%20registers%20of%20baptisms%20in%20Rupert's%20Land/HBCA%20E-4-1b/HBCA%20E-4-1b-%20fo-230.jpg
1875	Red River	African	<p>Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch: Métis and original White settlers affidavits : C-14933</p> <p>Mary Lewis (born Linklater)</p> <p>LAC RG15, vol 1324, sal-z</p> <p>http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c14933/504?r=0&s=4</p>	Mary Louise Linklater Lewis, wife of James Lewis [son of James who was son of Joseph?]	Scrip application: “My said husband [James Lewis] is the son of James Lewis who is reputed to be and admitted to me that he is the son of an African.” [her husband would be Joseph’s grandson, I think?]

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
			<p>Attestation of Mary Louise Linklater Lewis regarding her child Margaret Slater</p> <p>https://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&rec_nbr=1503999&lang=eng&rec_nbr_list=1503998,1504003,4689879,1503999,2058041,1503994,1481542,1510878,20885,20886</p> <p>Scrip affidavit for Slater, Margaret; born: 24 May 1862; father: Jeremiah Slater; mother: Mary Linklater</p>		

Date	Location	Term(s)	Source or link	Speaker or Writer	Notes
			(wife of James Lewis, illegitimate child) = Demande de certificat pour Slater, Margaret; né(e): le 24 mai 1862; père: Jeremiah Slater; mère: Mary Linklater (épouse de James Lewis, enfant illégitime)		
1881	St. Clements	African	Census of Canada https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1881&op=pdf&id=e008210100		Census lists him as “African” under “origins.”

Appendix B: John [Jack] Easter Chronology

Date	Event	Reference or Link
1776 ca	Born. Date based on his being about 7 when Edward Jarvis bought him in 1783	See frame 27 at HBCA B.3/a/81, Albany Post Journal, 1782 – 1783. http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M7/B3-A-81.pdf
1783 April 19	Albany Edward Jarvis reported he had bought an Esquimaux boy from the Albany River Cree: ...Traded an Esquimaux boy, who I found the Indians were for murdering if I had not done so, paid 30 Beaver for him, and hope as he is only about 7 y ^{rs} old a promising tractable Child he will make a useful Servant to y ^e Company, being traded on Easter Eve named him Easter.	See frame 27 at Albany Post Journal, 1782 – 1783. http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M7/B3-A-81.pdf
1793	Travelled from Osnaburgh House to Brandon with Donald Mackay "Journal from Osnaburgh House to Red River by Donald Mackay with Three boats &	See frame 3 at HBCA B.22/a/1, Brandon House Post Journal, 1793 – 1794 http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M16/B2-2-A-1.pdf

	Two N West Canoes & nineteen Men VIZ." 1M16 B.22/a/1	
1796 November 19	<p>Brandon Brandon House Post Journal 1796-1797 B.22/a/4</p> <p>James Sutherland Frame 23-24 1796 Saturday November 19thJn^o Easter although a Esquimaux and the Company Slave, hearing of the desertion of Henderson and Richard, is mutineering of following their example Says he has no wages, can get nothing of his wants and necessaries, is proffered great wages from the Canadians _ I have flattered him and given as much as is in my power with propriety to supply his wants and given him a quart of Brandy yet it avails nothing, to go to [riggor?] with him I am loath his Ignorance gets the best of his reason I have been obliged therefore to lock the gates which has been only barr'd for some time,</p>	<p>See frames 23-24 at B.22/a/4, Brandon House Post Journal, 1796 – 1797</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M17/B22-A-4.pdf</p>

	<p>that he may not desert me in the night</p> <p>1796 November 20th ... the people had much trouble in keeping Easter from eloping on the night. This day I went to the Canadian House backt with 4 men and before he was [?] seized Richards and forced him down to the House and lockt the gates on him, had I not taken him suddenly the canadians was determined to assist him, in this adventure I run a risqué as he graspt his Cutlass and had he but warning, was determined to run me through before he was taken _ [story continues, talked with him, he agreed to return to duty and stop deserting] ...which has also put Easter of the thought of deserting _ [Jacob Henderson and Thomas Richards were the initial deserters]</p>	
<p>Before 1800 [ca 1797?]</p>	<p>[out of Albany District] Contract with HBC for 1800 indicates he had signed his</p>	<p>See HBCA names index for Servant's Contracts A.32/12 fo.2</p>

	previous contract. Contracts were often for 3 years.	
Before 1800 [ca 1797?]	[out of Albany District] Contract with HBC for 1800 indicates he had signed his previous contract. Contracts were often for 3 years.	See HBCA names index for Servant's Contracts A.32/12 fo.2
1801	<p>Brandon House</p> <p>Has a family</p> <p>"From Mr Jn McKay</p> <p>Brandon house Jan. 20th 1802</p> <p>Dear Thomas</p> <p>Your men arrived here after a Journey of 9 Days. I am sorry to find your prospects are so poor. You will strive all in your power to get provisions for our going out, for be afsured there is nothing to be expected from this place - Jack Easter & his family will come here by water in the Spring....</p> <p>Jn McKay</p> <p>To Mr Miller Red River"</p> <p>Appears to be doing a lot of coppering/wood working</p> <p>"A Journal of Occurrences Weather &c &c at Brandon House commencing May 23rd, 1801 by Mr Tho. Bunn in Charge."</p>	<p>See frame 30 at HBCA B. 22/a/9, Brandon House Post Journal, 1801 - 1802</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M17/B22-A-9.pdf</p>

1793-1810	In the Brandon records from 1793, brought in by John McKay to 1807, then after 1808 [see Fidler for 1808]. There are specific references in this thesis as well. Worked largely as a provisioner.	See thesis at https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/bitstream/handle/1993/915/mq23256.pdf?sequence=1
1804 May [8]	Brandon Frame 15-16 May [8] John Easter ill at Brandon House: “he is a good lad, a good Steersman and very servisable in many other respects.”	See frames 15-16 at HBCA B.22/a/11, Brandon House Post Journal, 1803 – 1804 http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M17/B22-A-11.pdf
1808 April 1 st Friday	Peter Fidler – Journals of Exploration and Survey [Swan River to Red River] Journal of a Journey from Swan to the Red River and down it in [a inserted] Canoe from the Elbow to its entrance into Lake Winnepeg_ & along the South & Eastern Shores to its Discharge into the Elongation of the Saskatchewan River or Nelson’s River. By Peter Fidler 1790-1809 E.3/3	See frame at: HBCA E.3/3, Peter Fidler journals of exploration and survey, 1790-1809 http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA/PETER%20FIDLER%20FONDS/HBCA-E3-3/HBCA-E3-3-101.jpg See whole journal at http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LISTINGS_IMAGES/LISTINGS_DET_IMAGES/SISN%20750415?sessionsearch

	<p>HBCA 4M 103 18th Ins^t [April] he sent James Sinclair & Jack Easter an Esquimeaux who arrived [f52] here – but the day after sent them back [were sent with 2 horses to take him to their house, but he wanted to go by water]</p>	
<p>1808 May 7th Saturday</p>	<p>Peter Fidler – Journals of Exploration and Survey [Swan River to Red River] Journal of a Journey from Swan to the Red River and down it in [a inserted] Canoe from the Elbow to its entrance into Lake Winnepeg _ & along the South & Eastern Shores to its Discharge into the Elongation of the Saskatchewan River or Nelson’s River. By Peter Fidler 1790-1809 E.3/3 HBCA ... Jack Easter one of the Albany men kills several Ducks, & some Geese every day walking along shore – he</p>	<p>See frame here: HBCA E.3/3, Peter Fidler journals of exploration and survey, 1790-1809 http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA/PETER%20FIDLER%20FONDS/HBCA-E3-3/HBCA-E3-3-108.jpg See whole journal at http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LISTINGS_IMAGES/LISTINGS_DET_IMAGES/SISN%20750415?sessionsearch</p>

	<p>also killed several Turtles about 10 lb weight. This river a plentiful place for these animals – [describes take at Brandon House, very few beaver in comparison to total]</p>	
1809-1810	<p>Brandon, see earlier Molly Clarke's thesis reference</p> <p>See also 1810-11 Brandon House Journal transcription here</p> <p>http://www.somecanadianhistory.ca/bran181011.html</p>	<p>See thesis at</p> <p>https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/bitstream/handle/1993/915/mq23256.pdf?sequence=1</p>
Ca 1815-1816	<p>Gone a freeman in Red River B.27/b/1</p> <p>Letter from James Sutherland, Swan River to James Bird.</p> <p>October 3 1816</p>	<p>See this part of the letter at frame 5 here HBCA B.27/b/1, Carlton House (Saskatchewan District) correspondence book, 1816 - 1817</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M175/B27-B-1.pdf</p>
1820-21	<p>1820-1821</p> <p>Upper Red River Servants' Accounts</p> <p>Does not appear to be in the next year's abstracts of servants' accounts</p>	<p>See:</p> <p>HBCA B.235/d/1, Upper Fort Garry Servants' Books</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M634/B235-D-1.pdf</p> <p>see also frame 11 at B.239/g/1, Northern Department, Abstracts of Servants' Accounts</p>

		<p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M799/B239-G-1.pdf</p>
1822	<p>Brandon then to Red River because of illness £20 pa. (2) his mark previous contract taken ill released to settle in Colony</p>	<p>HBCA A.32/27 fo.2 Index of Servants Contracts, HBCA here https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/name_indexes/hbc_servants_contracts.html</p>
1827	<p>1827 census 97. Lot __, John Easter, age 51, Protestant, Rupert's Land, 1 married man, 1 woman, 1 cow, 1 calf, 1 acre</p>	<p>See: HBCA E.5/1 Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA/RED%20RIVER%20SETTLEMENT%20CENSUS%20RETURNS/HBCA-E5-1/HBCA-E5-1-005.jpg See entire census at http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LISTINGS_IMAGES/LISTINGS_DET_IMAGES/SISN%2091912?sessionsearch</p>
1829	<p>Unspecified [Brandon House 1829-31] In contract £15 pa. (2) his mark Servants' Register indicates he worked as a Cooper and a cart maker as well</p>	<p>HBCA A.32/27 fo.3 Index of Servants Contracts, HBCA here https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/name_indexes/hbc_servants_contracts.html see also servants register HBCA B.239/u/1 #629 Frame 94</p>

		http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M853/B239-U-1.pdf
1831 June 14	<p>Red River</p> <p>John and Nancy's marriage is in the Cathedral of St. John marriage register # 1, entry 217, 14 June 1831.</p> <p>Kipling Collection index card adds marriage by Banns She is a "Red River Indian" he is an "Eskimo living at Red River" note in Kipling Collection cards.</p>	<p>Personal communication from Gloria Romaniuk, Anglican Archives.</p>
1832-33	<p>Red River Census</p> <p>Age 51 Born Illinois? Possibly a mistake? No other people in household.</p>	<p>See image here HBCA E.5/6, Census returns for Red River Settlement and Grantown</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA/RED%20RIVER%20SETTLEMENT%20CENSUS%20RETURNS/HBCA-E5-6/HBCA-E5-6-006.jpg</p> <p>See entire census here</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LISTINGS_IMAGES/LISTINGS_DET_IMAGES/SISN%2094765?sessionsearch</p>
1834	<p>Brandon</p> <p>£15 pa. (1) his mark</p>	<p>A.32/27 fo.4</p> <p>Index of Servants Contracts, HBCA here</p> <p>https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/name_indexes/hbc_servants_contracts.html</p>

		<p>See also servants register B.239/u/1 #629</p> <p>Frame 94:</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M853/B239-U-1.pdf</p>
1835 May 13	<p>Fort Pelly</p> <p>May 13, 1835: Still blowing Strong from the South some rain fell in course of the day...Jack Easter returned from Beaver Creek he was nine days getting there he has not seen the water so low for 40 years.</p>	<p>See frame 17 at HBCA B.159/a/16, Fort Pelly post journal, 1834 – 1835</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M117/B159-A-16.pdf</p>
1835-1837	<p>Swan River</p> <p>Cart Maker and Cooper</p>	<p>See servants register B.239/u/1 #629 Frame 94</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA%20MICROFILM/1M853/B239-U-1.pdf</p>
1840	<p>Red River Census</p> <p>Age 70 one man, one woman</p>	<p>See image here HBCA E.5/10, Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Salteaux Indian Settlement, 1840</p> <p>http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA/RED%20RIVER%20SETTLEMENT%20CENSUS%20RETURNS/HBCA-E5-10/HBCA-E5-10-009.jpg</p> <p>See entire census here</p>

		http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LISTINGS_IMAGES/LISTINGS_DET_IMAGES/SISN%2094769?sessionsearch
1841 September 10	Wife Nancy baptized in St. John's Cathedral Nancy's baptism is in the Cathedral baptism register #2, entry 611. 10 September 1841.	Personal communication, Gloria Romaniuk, Anglican Archives
1843	Red River Census Age 73 One man, one woman	See image here HBCA E.5/11, Census returns for Red River Settlement, Grantown and Salteaux Indian Settlement, 1843 http://pam.minisisinc.com/DIGITALOBJECTS/ACCESS/HBCA/RED%20RIVER%20SETTLEMENT%20CENSUS%20RETURNS/HBCA-E5-11/HBCA-E5-11-009.jpg See census here http://pam.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LISTINGS_IMAGES/LISTINGS_DET_IMAGES/SISN%2094770?sessionsearch Images also available at http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c2170/865?r=0&s=4
1846 July 20	Nancy [Ann] was buried 20 July 1846, recorded in St. Andrew's burial register # 4, entry # 227	Personal communication, Gloria Romaniuk, Anglican Archives

	Age: 50 years	
1846	Red River Census Age: 80 [cards say age not given?] Eskimo	Red River Census Index Cards through Ancestry.com
1849	Red River Census Age 77	Red River Census Cards through Ancestry.com
1853 August 29	Red River Settlement John Easter was buried August 29, 1853, entry 464 of the Cathedral burial register # 1. [If 1776 is approximately his birth year, aged about 77]	Personal communication, Gloria Romaniuk, Anglican Archives, Diocese of Rupert's Land.

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