

**"CUSTODIANS OF A GREAT INHERITANCE": AN ACCOUNT OF THE  
MAKING OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES,  
1920 -1974**

BY

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in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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NB: I have taken care to use the spelling of words as they appear in the original or in transcriptions of the Hudson's Bay Company records so as to eliminate mistakes from misinterpretation of old spellings. I have also chosen to use English spellings as much as possible (eg. organise versus organize) to reflect the conventions in the archives.

## **Abstract**

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba is indispensable for the study of many aspects of Canadian history. This thesis will survey the history of the company's management of its archives from the establishment of the company in 1670 to the transfer of approximately 120 tons of archival material to Canada in 1974. The major theme in this history is the dilemma of access which the archival holdings presented to the company in the twentieth century. Sustained company interest in its old records as formal archives does not emerge until the early twentieth century when the company recognised that its history was of increasing interest to scholars who wanted access to the records and that its history could also be a valuable popular marketing asset. The company began to provide proper archival management of its historical records and, in so doing, realised that it had a responsibility to act as custodian of records which were of considerable importance to those interested in Canadian history. At the same time the company was very cautious about allowing publication of information from its archives. It did not want uncontrolled access to what it still often thought was sensitive company information. This thesis deals mainly with the company's efforts to respond to its archival

dilemma between the 1920s and 1974. During that time the company tried various measures to pursue the marketing and cultural goals it saw for its archives without granting unrestricted access. Gradually, however, it allowed more access to the archives. Indeed, by 1974, the company had resolved the dilemma and transferred custody of its archives to the Provincial Archives of Manitoba under liberal terms of access.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The business records of the Hudson's Bay Company have been collected, preserved, and protected for over 320 years as evidence of the company's legal and professional obligations to shareholders, to employees, to the British monarch, and the Government of Canada. These documents contain rare and unique information of business, scientific, historical, and political significance. John Armstrong and Stephanie Jones' *Business Documents: Their origins, sources and uses in historical research*, published in 1987 under the auspices of the Business Archives Council of Britain, underlines the importance of the records kept by the Hudson's Bay Company. It notes that the survival rate of business documents in Britain prior to 1800 is quite insignificant. That changed for the better through the 19th and 20th centuries, but the Hudson's Bay Company already had 130 years of records in 1800.<sup>1</sup>

Although a variety of material in the company archives has been researched and information from it presented in numerous publications, no general history of the company's

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<sup>1</sup> John Armstrong and Stephanie Jones. *Business Documents: Their origins, sources and uses in historical research* (London/New York: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1987), preface.

archives has been written. The study of the history of Canadian archives has largely been overlooked. For example, there is neither a monograph history of the National Archives of Canada nor one for any of the provincial archives.

The history of the Hudson's Bay Company archives in some ways reflects British archival traditions over the same period of time. How is it that huge accumulations of public, private, and ecclesiastical records of great antiquity, not to mention the company archives, survived? England has unrivalled archives dating back many centuries. Their preservation stood first on legal necessity and various monarchs instituted inquiries or issued commissions to search out and recover records belonging to the Crown. Ancient records were kept in such places as the Tower of London, but attention was given only periodically to their preservation, arrangement, and accessibility.<sup>2</sup> As long as the records were considered part of the royal treasure they were kept with the same care.

In due course the accumulation of government records received serious consideration. The State Paper Office was

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<sup>2</sup> Charles F. Mullett, "The 'Better Reception, Preservation, and More Convenient Use' of Public Records in Eighteenth-Century England," *American Archivist*, 27, no. 2 (April 1964), 196-97.

set up in London in 1703, with its own Keeper<sup>3</sup> and in 1838 the Public Record Office was established.<sup>4</sup> However, its focus was only the public record. Considerable numbers of valuable religious, secular and business records were left in private hands at the mercy of time and the environment. Records often survived simply because no one bothered to destroy them.

Credit must be given to companies such as the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company for voluntarily maintaining custody and providing some preservation for the records they had kept from the date of their founding. The reasons for keeping a tight hold on company archives were initially related to legal and business concerns rather than a strong commitment to preservation for historical purposes. But the fact remains that the Hudson's Bay Company kept an almost continuous record of its day-to-day business in both London and in North America from 1670.

The Hudson's Bay Company arranged for the first inventory and index of its company books in 1796. Although

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Hallam, "Problems with record keeping in early eighteenth century London: Some pictorial representations of the State Paper Office, 1705-1706," *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 6, no. 4 (October 1979), 219.

<sup>4</sup> "General Introduction to the Records," *Guide to the Public Record Office*, Volume 1 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963), 1.

the early years of the company reflected the prevalent carelessness in keeping archival records, from 1695 they had had the benefit of a stable location on the same site as the business. Credit for a long-awaited but recognised authority on the classification and arrangement of British archival records must go to Hilary Jenkinson whose *Manual of Archival Administration* was published in 1922. Up to that time such archival literature was only available from continental Europe. In 1932 Hilary Jenkinson was one of the consultants invited to inspect the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company. The theories of selection, arrangement, and description of archival material as set out in Jenkinson's *Manual* were the basis for the classification scheme set up in 1933 for records in the Hudson's Bay Company archives which were created prior to 1870.

The 1920s and 1930s were a time when British interest in local and private records was growing. It focused primarily on historical study and publication, with some thought to the preservation and organisation of the records. The Hudson's Bay Company had been in business for over two hundred and fifty years, two hundred and fifty years of industrial growth and technological improvement in the rest of the world. The company's management of its business records was firmly established in British traditions. The records of the Hudson's Bay Company from c.1870 reflect the

reconfiguration of the company in response to pressures from competition in the North American economy and from the restructuring of what was to become Canada.

Throughout the first two hundred years of its operations, the Hudson's Bay Company was predominantly interested in the fur trade in what is now northern Canada. The search for new fur supplies, and the resultant exploration and mapping led to the gradual expansion of the company in all directions from the shores of Hudson Bay. But by the end of the nineteenth century, the fur trade in Canada was drawing to a close. The role of the company as "true and absolute Lordes and Proprietors" of almost half of the North American continent, as defined in the Royal Charter, ended with Canadian Confederation. Under the Rupert's Land Act of 1868 the vast Hudson's Bay Company empire reverted to the Crown to be transferred to Canada. In the Deed of Surrender of 1869, the company received 300,000 Pounds Sterling and 7 million acres of land.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, outside competition from independent fur traders, expanding transportation and communication systems, and settlement of the west radically changed the business of the Hudson's Bay Company. Competition encouraged cash fur

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas MacKay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1949), 283.

purchasing and a cash economy quite different from the dependent economy of the fur trade. As a result of the Deed of Surrender and the settlement taking place in the region, the company shifted its emphasis from the fur trade to land sales and, eventually, to retail trade.

The company's interest in its records as historical documents which warranted the creation of a proper company archives can be traced to its 250th anniversary in 1920. To celebrate the anniversary the company hired publicity specialists in England and in Canada to plan events which would make use of its historical image. Sir William Schooling, a British journalist with an interest in history, was commissioned to write a brief history of the company since 1670. Schooling's subsequent proposal to write a more complete history of the company, using the archives as his primary source, introduced the necessity of classifying and indexing the original documents. Although he never completed the project, the six years that Schooling was the official historian for the company and the importance of that association provides a key to this thesis. Efforts had been made at various times in the history of the company to accumulate all of its records in London, but Schooling was the first outsider to have free access to those records. The move towards intellectual and material arrangement of the company's records begun by Schooling led to the

establishment of the company Archives Department in the early 1930s.

Businesses have traditionally been regarded by scholars as secretive and often unduly restrictive about access to records. The Hudson's Bay Company was no exception. But it eventually overcame a cautious, highly controlled access policy to accept its archival duty of preservation and reasonable public access for which it has been justly praised.

## Chapter 2: An Introduction to Records Keeping in the Hudson's Bay Company

The Hudson's Bay Company came into existence on 2 May 1670 with the granting of a Royal Charter by Charles II to the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Tradeing into Hudsons Bay and theire successors." It is unlikely that any of the "adventurers" could have imagined that the charter would still be valid and the company would be in business more than 320 years later.<sup>1</sup> Details of the earliest activities of the committee of seven plus the governor, who were to direct the voyages and manage the business affairs of the company, were not recorded until November 1671 when, according to the first Minute Book, the committee:

Ordered that Mr. Rastel<sup>2</sup> doe forthwith give an account to this Committee not only of the whole charge of Setting out the Shippes & Stocks of the Adventurers this last voyage to Hudson's Bay, but also of the charge of all former Voyages beginneing from the first joynte Stocke of the Adventurers, & that there bee a true state of the Whole business & every particular man's interest duely sett forth & entered in fayre

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<sup>1</sup> The Charter's articles of incorporation are still valid although the Supplemental Charters of 1970 have annulled all its provisions except those incorporating the company.

<sup>2</sup> Alice Johnson, a company archivist, wrote a biographical note about Thomas Rastell in *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Record Society 1671-1674*, Hudson's Bay Record Society, Volume V (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1942), 3.

Vellum booke against tuesday next the 14th day of  
this instante November, if it can bee Soe Soone  
done.<sup>3</sup>

E.E. Rich suggests in volume five of the Hudson's Bay Record Society publications that there may have been books and papers, including a rough minute book, from the first four years that "were lost or carried away by one of their Servants." The minutes from 1671 "suggest that things had been informal and were now being straightened out and regularised."<sup>4</sup> Rastel's work was truly the beginning of the records keeping process. But the job of record keeping was not to be "Soe Soone done" and is still being done by company employees. The "fayre Vellum booke" stand proudly on the shelves in an air-conditioned and humidity-controlled room in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Of course, not all of the great records of the earliest years of the company have survived. Many were destroyed and a few have strayed into other archives. The challenge of making the records and keeping the records in London and in Rupert's Land was not easy to meet. From time to time the committee in London laid down rules for keeping post account

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<sup>3</sup> Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter HBCA/PAM) Section A.1/1, fo. 3d, London Minute Books, 7 November 1671.

<sup>4</sup> E.E. Rich, *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company 1671-1674*, Hudson's Bay Record Society, Volume V (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1942), xv.

books and journals. As early as 1683, the committee directed the factors of the posts on Hudson Bay to keep "Journalls of what hath been done in the respective factories & of all occurrances that have happened to them the yeare past."<sup>5</sup> These daily journals were sent to London yearly with the returning fur cargoes. As well, "Journals of discoveries etc."<sup>6</sup> were kept and taken to London by the captains of vessels sailing into Hudson Bay for the company:

Wee also Order you to send us Coppies of all those Journals, that have been kept by your self & others, & what discoveries have been made in ye voyages to y:e Northward, also what Number of People, & what sort you have met w:th, & what quantity of Whales have been seen, & what other sorte of fish are in those parts, likewise from whence ye flood comes, & from what point of y:e Compass, & how much ye Tides have flow'd up & downe.<sup>7</sup>

In 1696, with England at war with France, Captain Henry Baley was instructed "to sett forth in warlike manner ye sd ship called the Dering ffrigtt under his own comand ... Provided alwaise that ye sd Henry Baley keepe an exact Journall of his proceedings & therein particularly take notice of all prizes which shall be taken by him."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in E.E. Rich, ed., *Copy-Book of Letters Outward &c, Begins 29th May, 1680 and Ends 5 July, 1687*, Hudson's Bay Record Society, Volume XI (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1948), 73.

<sup>6</sup> See HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/4, Hudson's Bay Company Archives Records, Research Tools - Annals, 1720.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/3, 1696.

Storage of the records which made their way back to London was initially haphazard but many moves and inconsistent storage conditions seem to have had little adverse effect on the condition of the records which are in the archives today. During the first decade of the company's history, when the committee met in London at various establishments, including the Tower, the Mint, Prince Rupert's House, and Garraway's and other coffee houses, the records moved with the committee. The Excise Office was used for meetings and as storage for papers and books in the 1670s, as was the Golden Anchor in Cornhill where the company rented a committee room. In 1680, committee member Mr. Letton was ordered:

...to buy an Iron bound chest with 3 Locks and Keys wherein the Pattent & Seale of the Company and such other things as shall be thought fitt by the Committee may be lodged, of which keyes the Deputy from and for the time being shall allways have the keeping of the principall Key and the others to be disposed of as ye Committee shall think fit.<sup>9</sup>

This "great trunk" was one of the earliest repositories, if not the first, for the company's records.<sup>10</sup> They were also stored in committee member John Letton's home. In 1682 a lease was taken on Scrivener's Hall and it was ordered that the Screetors trunck and all other things belonging to the Compa. be removed from Mr. Lettens

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<sup>9</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/2, fo. 20d, 4 May 1680.

<sup>10</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/5/15, Alice Johnson's notes for a talk she gave in Salt Lake City in 1963.

house to Scribners hall of which Mr. Stone & the Secretary is to take care thereof.<sup>11</sup>

The committee and its records had a home there for fourteen years.

Concern for the records is evident throughout the minutes with references to the "Bookes" and their protection. The security of information was noted as early as 1679:

No Bookes or Papers belonging to the Company shall at any time be removed by any person or persons whatsoever from the Committee Roome without Order of the said Committee.<sup>12</sup>

William Janes, a clerk hired at about the same time to keep the book of orders, under the instruction of the deputy governor, had to take an oath of secrecy.<sup>13</sup> Rules of limited access to the records are evident throughout the history of the company.

Writing clerks were hired to assist the factors in keeping the books at the larger posts on Hudson Bay. In fact, Thomas Gorst was employed as secretary to Governor Charles Bayly on his exploration of the coast of James Bay from 1670 to 1675. His detailed journals provided accounts

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<sup>11</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/1, 1682.

<sup>12</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/2, fo. 2d, 28 November 1679.

<sup>13</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/1, 1679.

of life in the first posts on the bay.<sup>14</sup> The work of the clerks was critically scrutinized. Samuell Hopkins was the clerk at Albany Fort in 1721 when it was noted that his "handwritting is alter'd for ye worse...he affecting too much flourishing & makes his letters so small some scarce to be discern'd, w'ch pray acquaint him of, & that he take care to mind his hand for ye future."<sup>15</sup> It was agreed that he would be allowed to continue at the salary of 20 Pounds Sterling per annum but "at the same time he is to be acquainted yt The Committee Expect he Improuve his hand to make his Letters & figuers Larger, & without flourishing."<sup>16</sup> He was reprimanded again in 1722 by letter informing him that he could stay two years longer at the same wage but that his

handwriting must improve, as letter and figures too small, and too many flourishes...for you wrote a much Better Hand when you went over first then now, for we can Hardly Read your letters, & hope you will observe your Governors Directions in all things....<sup>17</sup>

A further reference to Samuell Hopkins appears in the next year and suggests that he was absent without leave from

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<sup>14</sup> Alice Johnson, "Gorst, Thomas," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 343. Gorst's journals, now in the Guildhall Library in London, were used by John Oldmixon in writing *The British Empire in America* (1708).

<sup>15</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/5, 1721.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 1722.

Albany Fort from October 1722 until he appeared before the committee in London in 1723. The committee "Resolved That he be never Employed in ye Comp s Service for ye future."<sup>18</sup> Interestingly enough the saga carries on to 1724 when an entry indicates that Samuell Hopkins was "entertained" by the committee and "notwithstanding his former Miscarriages" was sent to York Fort for two years at 14 Pounds Sterling per annum along with a letter concerning him from Governor Macklish.<sup>19</sup> He must have learned to contain his "flourishes" because there are no further references to Hopkins.

Another comment about writing style was made in 1742 to James Isham at Prince of Wales Fort:

Notwithstanding our former directions, your General letter is not wrote in Paragraphs which you must not fail to observe for the future answering distinctly each Paragraph of our Letter.<sup>20</sup>

When Captain John Newton was appointed chief factor at York East in 1748 he was given these instructions:

You are not to Communicate any of the Companys Affairs by Letter or otherwise nor deliver any writings or Journal of your proceedings to any Person or Persons whatever, save only to those of Your Council whom you are to Consult on all occasions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 1723.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1724.

<sup>20</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/7, 1742.

<sup>21</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/8, 1748.

And in order to prepare himself for the job ahead he was provided with a collection of books from York Factory including a journal, account book and surgeon's indent, "for your perusal in your Voyage Outward that you may make your Self Master thereof by such time as you shall Arrive in Hudsons Bay."<sup>22</sup> In 1754 directions were sent by letter that "Maps and Charts [were] to be drawn in ink and not in pencil."<sup>23</sup> Accolades for work well done were also given.

Minute 266 for 24 February 1808 noted:

Ordered that George Roberts Apprenticed to Captn Hanwell be presented with the sum of Ten Guineas for a neat & well drawn Chart of Hudson's Bay deposited with the Company, as an Encouragement to his steady perseverance in the Improvement of his Nautical Skill & knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

In 1695/6 the company took premises on Fenchurch Street in London and "the Secretary as also the Warehouse Keeper were now ordered to take the first opportunity of Removeing the goods into the new house & to take care that nothing be imbeziled or Lost."<sup>25</sup> A minute of the committee for 30 January 1741 referred to the acquisition of archives from a former servant of the company. The secretary was ordered to pay £2.2.0 to a Mr. Bland "for some Old Books and Odd things

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/9, 1754.

<sup>24</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/16, 1808.

<sup>25</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/3, 1696.

that were in the Possession of Mr. Ker dec'd who was his Uncle and had been in the Company's service some time Since.<sup>26</sup> The company occupied the same building on Fenchurch until 1794 when it acquired Nos. 3 and 4 Fenchurch Street which became known as Hudson's Bay House. About this time the first arrangement of the records was indicated in the committee minutes. The secretary was ordered to:

...pay to W. John Brome the Sum of Twenty Guineas in consideration of the Labour & Trouble in classing and arranging the Company's Books from the Commencement of the Company & making an Inventory of & Index to the same.<sup>27</sup>

The resulting inventory is probably the "Inventory of Books, &c," classified as HBCA/PAM A.64/45. It includes records dating from 1667-1796 with addenda made up to 1819 by later staff members. This inventory lists the records which form the basis of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives and includes a layout chart to their position in the bookcases at the time.

The Hudson's Bay Company offices remained at Fenchurch Street until 1865 when the warehouse was moved to No. 1 Lime Street, the former warehouse of the East India Company. Hudson's Bay House offices moved to No. 1 Lime Street the following year and the records were stored in the warehouse. They remained there until 1924 when a fur warehouse, Beaver

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<sup>26</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/6a/7, 1741.

<sup>27</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/47, fo. 80, 2 November 1796.

House, was constructed in Trinity Lane at Garlick Hill and separate accommodation was provided for the archives for the next three years. During this time many of the company's records were also kept at the residence rented for Sir William Schooling on Elvaston Place. A new Hudson's Bay House was completed at 68 Bishopsgate in 1928 and the archival records were moved to the top floor where adequate space had been designated for them. Except for the six years of the Second World War when the archives was moved out of London to the governor's home, Hexton Manor, for storage, Hudson's Bay House was its permanent home until 1955 when it was moved to Beaver House. The company had sold the building at 68 Bishopsgate in 1948 and moved its offices to Beaver House on Queen Street. It continued to rent space for a time in the old building where the archives was able to remain until it could be moved to Beaver House.

The competitive nature of business in general, and particularly the competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and other fur traders during the first two hundred years of their activity in North America required the company to take a secretive and protective approach to its business records. The company thus made records creation procedures, secure storage, and restricted access to its information higher priorities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, the company seemed

to be oblivious to the historical value of many of its records. As Douglas MacKay wrote in his "unauthorized" history of the company:

...if ever an historic organization was indifferent to the glamour of its past, it was this Company of Adventurers during the first two and a half centuries of its existence. The fluctuations of a business which originated in the subarctic and ended in the luxury trades of Europe were too all-absorbing to permit the cultivation of company annals....<sup>28</sup>

Books had been written about the company as early as 1708<sup>29</sup> but few authors had the benefit of access to the Hudson's Bay Company archives. John Oldmixon's *British Empire in America* was written less than forty years after the granting of the charter. He had in his possession original papers including Gorst's journal, some governor's papers, and other memoirs. He does not explain their provenance. He was convinced "that even by the Company's Books [not] much more is to be gather'd."<sup>30</sup> In the preface to his book, Oldmixon apologised for the fact that he did not have all the information he wished to have to write his book but, without referring to the company specifically, he blamed the negligence on those he had solicited for memoirs and who had

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<sup>28</sup> MacKay, 34.

<sup>29</sup> John Oldmixon published his 2 volume *British Empire in America* in 1708 with a 2nd edition in 1731 and German editions in 1721, 1727, and 1776.

<sup>30</sup> Oldmixon, *The British Empire*, x.

not furnished him with them.<sup>31</sup> He was perhaps the first author to encounter "the tight-lipped reserve with which the Company met inquiries, an attitude which was to become second nature to the officers and servants..."<sup>32</sup> as identified by MacKay.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, there was growing interest in writing histories and the company's history was an intriguing topic. Robert Miller Christy completed a two volume history of the Hudson's Bay Company, *The Last Great Monopoly*, in 1894, after consulting a lengthy list of books in the Library of the British Museum.<sup>33</sup> Beckles Willson published *The Great Company* which was "compiled from the Company's archives" and other sources in 1900. Lord Strathcona, the governor of the company from 1889 to 1914, permitted Willson to have access to the company's documents. In return, Willson recorded his gratitude "for assistance and courtesies rendered" to him. He also acknowledged his indebtedness to "Mr. William Ware,

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<sup>31</sup> Oldmixon, viii.

<sup>32</sup> MacKay, 43-44.

<sup>33</sup> Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), MG9 A75-1, Box 5, Bibliography of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1887.

the courteous secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>34</sup> In his introduction to the book Strathcona calls Willson's narrative "a most interesting contribution to the history of Canada."<sup>35</sup> George Bryce was also given access to the archives by Strathcona, as well as by his predecessor, G.J. Goschen and, later, by Governor Thomas Skinner. Bryce's acknowledgements explain the access he was given:

The writer has had full means of examining documents, letters, journals, business records, heirlooms, and archives of the fur traders both in Great Britain and in Canada. He returns thanks to the custodians of many valuable originals, which he has used, to the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1881, Right Hon. G.J. Goschen, who granted him the privilege of consulting all Hudson's Bay Company records up to the date of 1821, and he desires to still more warmly acknowledge the permission given him by the distinguished patron of literature and education, the present Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, to read any documents of public importance in the Hudson's Bay House in London....<sup>36</sup>

Agnes Laut, a popular historian and author of numerous historical novels, was probably the first American historian to use the archives. Her two volume *The Conquest of the Great Northwest* was published in New York in 1907/08. She explained:

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<sup>34</sup> Beckles Willson. *The Great Company (1667-1871), Being a History of the Honourable Company of Merchants-Adventurers Trading into Hudson's Bay* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1900), x.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., xxix.

<sup>36</sup> George Bryce. *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1900), v.

I have relied for the thread of my narrative on the documents in Hudson's Bay House, London; the Minute Books, the Stock Books, the Memorial Books, the Daily Journals kept by chief factors at every post and sent to London from 1670. These documents are in tons. They are not open to the public. They are unclassified....Besides the documents of Hudson's Bay House, London, there is a great mass of unpublished, unexploited material bearing on the Company in the Public Records Office, London.<sup>37</sup>

Laut also acknowledged her Hudson's Bay Company contacts, Lord Strathcona and William Ware. The governor of the company provided access to the records based on his perception of the merits of individual applications. Access seems to have been granted to well known authors who might be expected to write favourable popular histories of the company which stressed the "romance" of the fur trade in a far flung wilderness rather than controversial details of company business practices.

Growing interest in the company's historical records was also shown by the Canadian government in the late nineteenth century. In 1898 Joseph Pope, former Secretary to John A. Macdonald and Under Secretary of State to Wilfrid Laurier, approached the company in search of records of Canadian historical significance for the Public Archives in Ottawa. Pope's letter stated:

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<sup>37</sup> Agnes C. Laut. *The Conquest of the Great Northwest (Being the story of the Adventurers of England known as the Hudson's Bay Company)* (New York: The Outing Publishing Company, 1907/08), xviii-xix.

Now it is commonly understood by those who take an interest in such subjects, that there exists scattered throughout the various Posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, a series of MSS [manuscripts], Notes, Memoranda and Diaries, etc., bearing upon the early days of the Company, and containing much information respecting the characteristics of the Indians; the rivalries of Trading Companies; the climatic conditions at the various Posts, etc. It is also very generally believed that, owing to the ravages of time, and other causes, these MSS are gradually disappearing, and it is felt that an effort should be made to rescue documents of this nature while there is time, and safeguard them for posterity in the manner I have indicated.<sup>38</sup>

Although no records were transferred to Ottawa, some of historical importance did, as a result, make their way to the company's offices in London. In response to Pope's inquiry the company instructed its officials to carry out an inventory of any books and papers that were to be found in any of the posts in Canada. An example of this work is seen in a letter to R.H. Hall, then in charge of the Victoria office:

A request has been received from the Governor and Committee to be advised of the condition of the Company's records at the various Posts. I have therefore to instruct you to see that all old books of any importance, especially the Journals, were properly sorted out, and a list of them sent to this Office with the least possible delay. Should there be in this list any of particular import you will be good enough to have them mentioned. Ordinary books of account need not be mentioned on the list, but the same care in preserving them should be shown....<sup>39</sup>

Hall responded by making the request of the districts in his

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<sup>38</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/5/3 Archives Department Records Control and History, copy of letter from Pope to Chipman, 3 March 1898.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., copy of letter from Chipman to Hall, 13 October 1899.

department with this response from A. Murray in Port Simpson:

Herewith I beg to send lists of Books at this and Hazelton Posts which are considered worthy of record. At Babine there was nothing considered in this light, and Mr. Stevens says that all the old Books of Massett were brought over here some years ago. There are a lot of old account Books here, but they do not contain anything of particular interest, and consequently we have not recorded any of these....<sup>40</sup>

At the same time the company's approach to access to its historical records sometimes resulted in denial of access to historical researchers. In 1913 W. Stewart Wallace, the historian and future president of the Champlain Society, was refused permission to examine the archives of the company. His recounting of an interview with Lord Strathcona describes the atmosphere:

I can remember the interview as vividly as if it were yesterday. The old man, bending on me his beetling white eyebrows, inquired what it was I wanted to learn from the Company's archives; and since I had no particular line of inquiry I wished to follow, but was anxious merely to go on a sort of general fishing expedition, I fear I was not able to answer his question very satisfactorily. He was most polite in expressing a desire to supply me with any particular items of information of which I might be in search; but he did not appear anxious...to turn me loose among the Company's archives. There the interview ended.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., copy of letter from Hall to Murray, 10 January 1900.

<sup>41</sup> W.S. Wallace, "The Champlain Society," *The Beaver* (September 1934), 43.

Not all senior company officials were concerned about locating and protecting archival material. Governor Thomas Skinner's authorization of the destruction of records sheds further light on the other side of the dilemma posed by the existence of company records: the fear of making them available. An account of his approach comes from C.H. French, the British Columbia District Manager, in 1922. He was writing in response to the Fur Trade Commissioner's request for information regarding the incomplete records of the B.C. District:

During Sir Thomas Skinner's visit to this Coast some years ago, he instructed that all books and records be sent to the incinerator plant and destroyed, excepting those dealing with the previous ten years business. The execution of this was put in my hands and I have to confess that my instructions were not carried out because I felt that there was nothing contained in these old books that the Company would be ashamed of and in after years they would prove very valuable from an historical point of view.<sup>42</sup>

The Hudson's Bay Company's archival dilemma began to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The company had accumulated a large body of historical business records which were beginning to stimulate research interest. The company's willingness to grant access to some of these records to certain historical researchers and, indeed, to endorse their findings in the prefaces of their books suggests that the company had begun to realise that it

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<sup>42</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/5/3, 23 January 1922.

could benefit from favourable publicity generated by such histories. The company responded on occasion to this interest in its history by requesting its officers to identify and protect historical records. However, it did not do so consistently. On occasion instruction was given to destroy old records indiscriminately.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, some researchers were denied access to the existing company records. And the company did not provide a formal archival service or office which would be responsible for administering custody of and access to its older records. The absence of a consistent records retention and access policy as well as of a formal archival service to assist researchers suggests that the company was wary about liberal access to its records at the same time as it wanted the advantage of favourable treatment of its past. The archival dilemma remained to be resolved.

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<sup>43</sup> As French's account suggests, at least, some company officials assumed this was to be done in order to eliminate information which may have proved embarrassing to the company.

**Chapter 3: Sir William Schooling and the Hudson's Bay Company's History Project, 1920-1926**

In the 1920s the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to resolve its archival dilemma by sponsoring the preparation of an official company history to be written by Sir William Schooling. The company thought that the history would make information from the company archives widely available. In effect this would secure the publicity benefits of the company's history on the company's own terms because the company would control what appeared in the history. The archival obligation could be fulfilled without allowing outside researchers generous terms of direct access to the archives. The company's dilemma, however, became more difficult to resolve in the early 1920s as the history project faltered. It was finally discontinued in 1926.

At the same time, Schooling's work led him to become a strong advocate of the importance of providing a proper company archives to house and make available the valuable historical records which he had discovered during his research for the official history. Schooling enlisted support for his archival proposal from Canadian archivists and historians who wanted wider access to the company's archives. Faced with these various pressures, in the late 1920s the company adopted another strategy: a programme of

publication of original archival documents, which once again would be under company control, and was not accompanied by liberal terms of access to the archival records by outside researchers.

As Peter Geller notes, in the 1920s the Hudson's Bay Company began to emphasise strongly the importance of good public relations to the firm's business prospects. It became increasingly aware that its long and colourful history was a valuable asset in this regard.<sup>1</sup> The manner in which the company celebrated its 250th anniversary reflects these tendencies. Holford Bottomley was hired as a publicity specialist. He had been the Director of Special Publicity to the National War Savings Committee and National War Bonds Campaign during World War I.<sup>2</sup> He was to produce a brief "souvenir" history of the company and a film about the company's work. He was also to visit the company's Canadian stores and offices in order "to advise on schemes to be carried out locally in connection with the anniversary."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter G. Geller. "Constructing Corporate Images of the Fur Trade: The Hudson's Bay Company, Public Relations and *The Beaver Magazine*, 1920-1945." Master's thesis, University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg (1990), 30.

<sup>2</sup> HBCA/PAM RG2/2/127 Canadian Committee Office, 30 April 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

In November 1919 Bottomley hired William Schooling to prepare the brief history of the company. Schooling, an author and journalist, was a personal friend of the company governor, Robert Kindersley, and both had also been on the National War Savings Committee. Schooling immediately threw himself into the work. He not only had a proposed layout ready by the first of December but had already written three chapters. The final product or "brochure," as it was often called, was entitled *The Governor and Company of Adventures of England Trading into Hudson's Bay during Two Hundred and Fifty Years 1670-1920*. It was published in London in 1920 in time for the anniversary celebrations.

The brochure reflected the company's increasing awareness that it had a responsibility to share the archival material it had accumulated. Governor Kindersley expressed this sense of obligation for proper custody of records in the introduction to Schooling's brochure:

The Committee of to-day recognise that they are the custodians of a great inheritance, which it is their duty to hand on, enhanced and not impaired, to future generations...a record which is unique in the history of trading corporations.<sup>4</sup>

It is unclear what reference material Schooling used in

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<sup>4</sup> Sir William Schooling. *The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay during Two Hundred and Fifty Years 1670-1920* (London: The Hudson's Bay Company, 1920), xii.

writing the brochure. Presumably he used previously published material but the book contained neither bibliography nor footnotes. The only reference to the gathering of material for the book is in a letter dated 15 April 1919 from Holford Bottomley to Secretary F.C. Ingrams in which Bottomley asked for:

1. A list of books that might be referred to for information.
2. A reproduction of the original charter.
3. A list of the stores
4. Copies of any literature, letter headings, advertisements...referring to the individual Stores.<sup>5</sup>

An editorial committee was set up to review the text after it was passed by Schooling to Bottomley and to answer any questions raised relating to specific topics in the company's history. Whether Schooling had access to the records that would have been stored in Hudson's Bay House at No. 1 Lime Street at that time is not documented.

To celebrate the 250th anniversary the company staff in London was invited to a dinner and each staff member was presented with a copy of the brochure. In Canada, the plans included local celebrations in each of the cities where the company had stores beginning with Winnipeg on the second of May. The governor's tour of Canada coincided with these celebrations. A publicity office had been set up in Winnipeg to manage the publicity related to the anniversary.

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<sup>5</sup> HBCA/PAM A.10/519, letter from Bottomley to Ingrams, 15 April 1919.

It was run by Clifton Thomas, an advertising agent from Chicago. Staff in Canada were also given a copy of the brochure while a list was prepared of prominent people who were to receive deluxe editions autographed by the governor. One hundred copies of the brochure were distributed to public libraries in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

And Schooling was hooked! In March 1920 he urged Governor Kindersley to consider having a complete history of the company written. "When reading up for the book I have just finished, I became extremely interested, and realized for the first time that the history of the Company is that of a large part of Canada and that the story has never been adequately told."<sup>7</sup> His detailed proposal suggested a five volume history including an annals or indexed chronology of the company to "be followed by a full history of the Company with numerous quotations from old documents of various kinds."<sup>8</sup> Schooling felt it would be necessary for him to inspect original documents of the company in London and in Canada as well as books and references in libraries and other archives. In order to accomplish this task "it would probably be worth while to go through the Company's minute

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<sup>6</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/164, fo. 156, 10 August 1920.

<sup>7</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/2406, letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 10 March 1920.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

books and other records, and index them."<sup>9</sup> Arrangements for Schooling to write a history of the company as proposed were confirmed by London Secretary Ingrams on behalf of Kindersley in April.<sup>10</sup>

It was agreed that Schooling would devote about half of his time to the book at a fee of £2000 per year. He would pay for his own secretary but "for extensive copying work additional help would be needed, for which the Company would pay." Likewise sundry expenses for "a large supply of paper, possible loose-leaf ledgers, or binding of MSS, as well as the cost of a certain number of books" would be charged to the company. The proposal also suggested that it would be necessary for him "to go to Canada to collect material, and to become familiar with the work of the Company."<sup>11</sup>

Schooling settled in as the company historian. He made provision for Kathleen Pincott to assist him in preparing the material for the book and began work on the first of May. Pincott soon became his tireless assistant. With the aid of four staff members she was given the task of reading

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> HBCA/PAM A.5/132, fo. 451, letter from Ingrams to Schooling, 22 April 1920.

<sup>11</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/2406, letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 29 March 1920.

the post journals, letter books and minute books and of arranging them in order. Brief extracts were prepared from these documents for what were later bound as the "Annals" from 1670-1820. The extracts were indexed.

Schooling, as well, was asked to write an account of the anniversary celebrations and was on hand to meet visiting historians and to provide reference services for requests requiring research in the records. It is evident from correspondence between Ingrams and Schooling during most of 1920 that Schooling's visits to the company's London premises were to examine company documents and books in the library. It is also noted that he consulted material at the British Museum and the Public Record Office. By the end of the year he had made his first suggestion, through Ingram to the governor and committee, that he should give more time to the history in 1921. A board minute of 4 January 1921 denied his request:

In regard to Sir William Schooling's suggestion that he should devote a greater portion of his time to the preparation of the Company's history than was originally agreed upon, the Board decided that they would prefer not to vary the agreement at present.<sup>12</sup>

Schooling had been working out of his home in Ladbroke Grove with his secretary and two typists. They copied documents that Schooling had on loan from the company. When space became too crowded he rented the house next door.

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<sup>12</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/164, fo. 234, 4 January 1921.

"All the Hudson's Bay Company material will be there...and this should enable me to give more effective supervision to the work of my assistants."<sup>13</sup>

During the time that Schooling was working on the larger history, he was instructed by the company secretary (Ingrams) to provide assistance in answering research requests regarding the archives and to assist researchers sent to his office. Schooling was the first outsider to have free access to all of the Hudson's Bay Company records and his connections with the historical community led to a controversy regarding George Simpson's Athabasca journal which provides a good example of the company's policies on access to its records. In the spring of 1921, Schooling was approached by Frederick Merk, a professor of history at Harvard University, who "had been in Europe for a year or so collecting a mass of original material, especially in connection with the Oregon question."<sup>14</sup> He visited Schooling's office where he viewed, and made notes from, "a number of letters and other documents belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, which throw a great deal of light upon the whole problem [of the history of Oregon]."<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> HBCA/PAM A.10/456, letter from Schooling to Ingrams, 1 January 1921.

<sup>14</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/163, copy of letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 31 October 1921.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

notes, including large extracts from George Simpson's 1842-45 journal, were passed by Schooling to Deputy Governor Charles Vincent Sale who "took fright at their extent."<sup>16</sup> On studying the extracts, Sale became "more than ever convinced of the danger of allowing publication" and asked Schooling to "inform Dr. Merk that it will not be possible to let him have this material."<sup>17</sup> The notes were censored by Sale. "Sixty documents or parts of documents were taken,"<sup>18</sup> and the remainder returned to Merk in November with the understanding, on the part of Sale, that none of the material would be published without the approval of the company. Schooling explained that he had Merk's "written understanding to publish nothing without our seeing it first."<sup>19</sup>

Merk eventually published his book but without further contact with the company. *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, was published in 1931 in the United States and Britain, with appropriate acknowledgments in the introduction:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., letter from Merk to Brooks, 2 May 1932.

<sup>17</sup> HBCA/PAM A5/136/192, letter from Sale to Schooling, 27 April 1921.

<sup>18</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/163, letter from Merk to Brooks, 2 May 1932.

<sup>19</sup> HBCA/PAM A10/458, letter from Schooling to Sale, 5 November 1921.

I am under obligations to Sir William Schooling, K.B.E., and to the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company for the greater part of the documents presented in this volume. I did not have access to the Company's archives themselves, the documents being selected by me from a manuscript catalogue and brought for transcription to an outside office....My transcripts were censored as I have indicated. I consider it permissible to say that the record of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Oregon Country, so far as I saw it, contains nothing that cannot bear the light of day. The standards imposed by the Honorable Committee on its servants were high in themselves...I believe the Company could but enhance its reputation by throwing open its archives without restriction to historians.<sup>20</sup>

The company was not impressed. It had expected to be informed of the possibility of publication. By that time, in the wake of the failure of Schooling's history project, it had made the commitment to publish material from the archives itself and did not look kindly on the fact that Merk had published information from the same document, Simpson's Journal, which the company was intending to publish. The company secretary, J.C. Brooks, on behalf of the new governor, Patrick Ashley Cooper, wrote to Merk questioning the lack of notice: "We do not appear to have received from you any copies of what you proposed to publish, nor do we appear to have given our official sanction to publication."<sup>21</sup> Merk was distressed at the

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<sup>20</sup> Frederick Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: Oxford University Press, 1931), xxxv.

<sup>21</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/163, letter from Brooks to Merk, 26 February 1932.

misunderstandings regarding the publication and suggested that the communication problem was with Schooling, who by then had been dismissed by the company. Merk acknowledged his original understanding which he had given to Sir William Schooling in 1921 but when the notes were returned to him so severely censored, after being in the possession of the company for six months, he presumed his original agreement was voided. "Our first understanding (that the censorship was to be a purely nominal one) became converted into the rigorous one of 1921, and this I certainly felt concluded the matter."<sup>22</sup> Although the company eventually acknowledged that "your book is edited in good spirit and the subject is treated in a satisfactory manner," it was still concerned that the book's "publication has interfered seriously with the Company's plans."<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the Merk publication concerns came to light in the early 1920s, Schooling had been chastised by Sale for allowing access to any portion of the company's archives. The minutes of the board meeting for 22 March 1921, record that "the Deputy Governor was authorized to write to Sir William Schooling that no expert must have access to the Hudson's Bay Company's papers, and that the Governor and

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<sup>22</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/163, letter from Merk to Brooks, 2 May 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., letter from Brooks to Merk, 15 April 1932.

Committee trusted him to preserve them from all third parties except the clerks engaged to assist him."<sup>24</sup>

Schooling continued to write the history but required more space to work and an arrangement that was more convenient than inspecting documents at Hudson's Bay House or having a few at a time sent to his home. When plans were being made to move out of No. 1 Lime Street to Beaver House in Garlick Hill, Schooling inquired about having space set aside for him and his secretary at Lime Street.<sup>25</sup> Ingrams indicated that such arrangements would be convenient. There was usually a staff of four full-time assistants employed by the company to work on the records from 1920-1926.<sup>26</sup>

Schooling visited Canada between April and October 1922 in order to obtain "authentic information from the Canadian Government Department of Archives in Ottawa and also to gather local colour by visiting cities in the Canadian West and some typical H.B.C. posts."<sup>27</sup> Deputy Governor Sale

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<sup>24</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/165, fo. 38, 22 March 1921.

<sup>25</sup> HBCA/PAM A.10/458, letter from Schooling to Ingrams, 31 January 1921.

<sup>26</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/19, "H.B.C. Old Records and Archives," 18 January 1933. Richard Leveson Gower (pronounced Lewson Gor) was the first archivist for the Hudson's Bay Company.

<sup>27</sup> HBCA/PAM A.10/458, letter from Sale to Schooling, 5 March 1921.

provided references for Schooling to George Wrong in Toronto and Dominion Archivist Arthur Doughty at the Public Archives in Ottawa among others.

Schooling's report on his return to London was filled with enthusiasm for the history project. "Canada," he said, "has made me appreciate more fully even than before, the privilege of being entrusted with the writing of the History of the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>28</sup> He arranged for records and old books to be sent to London from the company's Canadian offices in Winnipeg. He provided consultation on the selection and disposal of archival material at the Canadian Committee offices. He also met and conferred with members of the historical community in every Canadian city he visited. He was particularly excited about his visit to Ottawa where he attended a meeting of the Royal Society of Canada and where he met Prime Minister Mackenzie King. From that meeting he reported a "unanimous and very pronounced view that the Hudson's Bay Company documents had not been made as readily available for students as is desirable."<sup>29</sup>

Schooling spent most of his time in Ottawa at the Public Archives. Arthur Doughty, the Dominion Archivist,

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<sup>28</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/1165, Report of Schooling to the Governor, 27 November 1922.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

was quite keen to offer assistance and "prepared extensive notes...of documents and pictures." Schooling also met with Professor Wrong in Toronto, where he attended a meeting of the Champlain Society. That society's distinguished record of publication of archival documents underlined the lack of published archival material from the Hudson's Bay Company. Of course Schooling did not need to be convinced. In his report on the trip he spoke of the Champlain Society in glowing terms: "The fifteen volumes it has already published are of great value, and I am sure that, even for the Hudson's Bay Company, there would be a certain distinction in having some of its documents published by the Champlain Society."<sup>30</sup> Schooling came away with the proposal that either he or he and Doughty (also a member of the Champlain Society) could select, edit, and annotate Hudson's Bay Company material for publication by the Champlain Society.

Schooling was impressed with the level of archival care for historical material in Canada. The Public Archives had been housed in its own building since 1906. Access to the holdings was largely unrestricted. Schooling found this accessibility convenient during his visit to the archives. The archives of the Hudson's Bay Company was not only unorganized and without permanent housing, but was also completely inaccessible except to all but a few members of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

the company's staff. Schooling included this plea near the end of his report:

Another matter in which I am much interested, although not directly concerned, is the permanent keeping and arrangement of the archives. Historically, and even financially, these are of very great value, and unless I wholly misinterpret the opinion of the present Directors, they think that these should be housed, catalogued and cared for in a way befitting their importance.<sup>31</sup>

The criticisms of company access policy which he met in Canada reinforced his view of the problems which were becoming increasingly obvious in London regarding access to the company's records. Schooling reported that Canadian scholars maintained that an important part of the records documenting Canada's history was inaccessible to them.

The general opinion, in which I concur, is that, since the Hudson's Bay Company was the effective Government of a large part of Canada for two Hundred years, its documents for that period (viz. prior to about 1870) should be freely available, and documents since 1870 should either be withheld, or only open to inspection according to the merits of each applicant and the purpose of the investigation. It would be a great satisfaction in Canada if some such policy as this were adopted.<sup>32</sup>

Influenced by what he had seen in Canada, he went on to propose a library and adjacent archives with a librarian and an archivist fully employed by the company in the management of the records. He added that he would gladly advise the company on implementing these proposals.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Schooling was surprised by the amount of material relating to the Hudson's Bay Company that he had found on his visit to Canada. Indeed he seemed intimidated by the wealth of information that was available to him and concerned about whether he could meet the deadline on his contract with so much documentation to explore. He had been working on the project for three years but when he wrote to Deputy Governor Sale in May 1923 he did not give any indication of having accomplished much in the way of text. He apologised for the fact that the project was taking longer than anticipated:

When I formed my first estimate I had not recognised the extreme importance with which the Company's history is regarded in Canada, and the mass of material available there that has a bearing on the subject. Neither was I in the least adequately aware of the extent and the importance of the Company's archives.<sup>33</sup>

He continued his plea for a properly organised and indexed company archives because he had realised that he would be unable to complete a satisfactory history of the company without it.

Schooling suggested that the history project should be delayed until the archives was in order. He advised that the company should concentrate on publishing the complete archives. The board appointed a sub-committee to consider Schooling's suggestions but once again came to the

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<sup>33</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/1, letter from Schooling to Sale, 15 May 1923.

conclusion that publication of the archives was an entirely separate matter "about which there is really not grave urgency."<sup>34</sup> However, the board was "beginning to be rather agitated at the expense already incurred"<sup>35</sup> by Schooling's work. It was eager to have a date and financial accounting for the completion of the history. Schooling was also reminded to stick to the original plan, bearing in mind "that the Directors do not want the scope of the work to be enlarged from that originally decided upon."<sup>36</sup> Schooling would not let up. In a four page letter to Kindersley he outlined again, in even more detail, his proposal for a joint publishing venture with the Champlain Society. He also asked for more accessibility to the records by having them moved temporarily to a house where he could also live. And he felt it was essential to have many of the journals and letter books bound in some fashion. He referred to the first part of the history in that letter as "the encyclopedia" and in order to confirm his facts he asked for permission to send the proofs "to a number of the best people in Canada for criticism, revision and possible addition."<sup>37</sup> The project he proposed would now be four

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<sup>34</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/6, letter from Kindersley to Schooling, 12 July 1923.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/2, letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 19 July 1923.

volumes - two volumes of the history, one encyclopedia volume, and one volume of annals, bibliography and index.

In September 1923 the board discussed the subject again and made six recommendations regarding the history and Schooling's requests:

1. Sir William Schooling's remuneration to remain as at present.
2. The History to be completed not later than 31st December, 1925.
3. The Company to rent a suitable house for two years in which Sir William Schooling will reside and work on documents, in sections covering periods of 10 or 20 years at a time, transferred from the Archives as the work progresses, such documents to be returned to the Company as they are finished with.
4. All documents to be kept strictly private, no one being allowed access thereto other than Sir William Schooling and his assistants, except by formal consent of the Board.
5. Question of publication of History to be decided when Sir William Schooling is within sight of having the encyclopaedia articles ready for submission to Canada for criticism, etc.
6. All proofs to be submitted to the Board before publication.<sup>38</sup>

A house was rented for Schooling's use for two years. He was clearly pleased with the new accommodation. "No. 9 Elvaston Place," he said, "seems entirely suitable for our purposes. There is a big room on the first floor that will do excellently as the main place for storing the archives. If that proves insufficient, there is other accommodation available in which they can be safely kept."<sup>39</sup> But the

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<sup>38</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/167, fo. 30, 11 September, 1923.

<sup>39</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/2, letter from Schooling to London Manager, P.D. Stirling, 19 October 1923.

arrangements were not easily settled. Schooling had very clear opinions on every detail and his thoughts were not always as obvious to the Board of Directors which was trying to provide for his needs. He wanted more than ten or twenty years worth of documents at a time in order to have continuity in his writing. For example, post journals would be needed all at one time. "I should have the documents for the entire period and they should be arranged in convenient fashion."<sup>40</sup> He wanted steel shelving, not the steel cupboards which the Board thought would provide fire protection; he needed some minor renovations completed (stair carpet and curtains) before he moved in and regular house cleaning help; and the time limitation would make it impossible for him to "base the history as fully as might be on original sources."<sup>41</sup>

Even with all these conditions met, Schooling still had trouble with the arrangements. Kindersley tried to explain the board's position:

The Board's decision that not more than half of the documents shall be at Elvaston Place at one time, is not intended in any way to preclude you from having the whole of the documents there at one time or another, and you are perfectly free to choose what you want and to exchange them as necessary...you speak of the necessity for finishing the history quickly, but in view of the fact that you have already been engaged on

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 14 November 1923.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

the work for three years, and that by the recent decision of the Board you still have another two years in which to complete it, I do not think it can be said that we have curtailed you unduly in this respect.<sup>42</sup>

Schooling finally moved in at the end of December 1923 after the renovations had been completed and the steel shelving had been installed. The first documents were delivered in the second week of January. The premises on Lime Street were vacated during the next few months. Records were also being moved from there to Beaver House in Garlick Hill and a new building was being designed for 68 Bishopsgate. Much of the material was in packing cases and required a fair amount of time to unpack and to arrange on the shelves. Schooling was also involved in finding appropriate bindings for the archival material and appropriate storage methods for the large and unique map collection. The history project began to bog down even more as Schooling became diverted by the emerging archival priorities which he perceived and the logistics of the research. The company did not approve.

By the end of October 1924, the Board of Directors once again expressed its concern about Schooling's slow progress. It did acknowledge, however, that some of the problem was caused by interruptions from outside researchers. An

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<sup>42</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/6, letter from Kindersley to Schooling, 22 November 1923.

announcement that is extremely significant in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company archives was made by the board at this time:

Recognising the difficulty experienced by Sir William Schooling in resisting the insistent demand of Canadian enquirers for access to the Company's records, the following Resolution was passed:- Resolved that, after completion and publication of the History of the Company upon which Sir William Schooling is now engaged, steps be taken to publish such of its archives as may be deemed expedient.<sup>43</sup>

Schooling admitted he was overwhelmed. His solution this time was to recommend publication of what he called the "Annals of the Hudson's Bay Company", which would include quotations from the documents, with an explanatory text, notes, and index:

The first two volumes should cover the period from the beginning until the absorption of the North West Company in 1821. The third volume might with much advantage be almost wholly devoted to [George] Simpson. The reception of the first two or three volumes would enable you to determine what further volumes should be issued. There should, I think, be at least four volumes in all and there is ample material for making six volumes.<sup>44</sup>

He suggested that each volume of the "Annals" be published separately rather than at one time as planned for the history because he did not think this new format could be ready by the end of 1925, the company's deadline for publishing the history. Because the company had stated its

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<sup>43</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/214, fo. 134, 28 October 1924.

<sup>44</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/2, letter from Stirling to Schooling, 19 November 1924.

intention to publish some of its archival records Schooling was hesitant to commit his original version of the company's history to paper when he knew it would be superseded by the "real thing." The board considered Schooling's new proposals. On 27 November 1924 it agreed to the title "Annals of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives" but there were to be no more than four volumes covering the period 1670 to 1820 and the "Annals" were to be ready for publication by the end of December 1925. In his reply Schooling was non-committal about completion of the third and fourth volumes by the board's deadline. Nevertheless, the board said that it did "not wish to discuss the matter further until the actual proofs are submitted for approval."<sup>45</sup>

A month later Schooling expected to be able to supply the publishers, Oxford University Press, "with copy as quickly as they can set it up."<sup>46</sup> A meeting in April 1925 with the publisher's representative gave Schooling the opportunity to express his opinions about the format and presentation of the "Annals."<sup>47</sup> Deputy Governor Sale was concerned that any controversial material (presumably

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<sup>45</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/7, letter from Stirling to Schooling, 2 December 1924.

<sup>46</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/3, letter from Schooling to Sale, 2 January 1924.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., letter from Schooling to J. Chadwick Brooks, 21 April 1925.

referring to the company's business history) be excluded from the "Annals." He arranged for the galley proofs as corrected by Schooling to be submitted to him for his perusal.<sup>48</sup> In November Schooling informed Sale that he "shall be sending a steady stream of copy to the printers and working quite definitely for publication in next May."<sup>49</sup> Stirling reminded him to refer to previous correspondence to "see that the committee definitely established the 31st of December, 1925, as the date upon which the work should be complete" and "would you kindly give an indication of your programme so that the matter may be reconsidered."<sup>50</sup>

Schooling set out a new plan in early December to send fifty pages a week to the publishers but a letter to Stirling a week later suggests he had done nothing because the publishers had not responded to his plan. There was also some consideration of the inclusion of maps but since he was not given the opportunity earlier in the project to examine them he advised against this time-consuming addition, particularly for the first volume. The company conceded that all material for the first volume could be

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<sup>48</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/7, letter from Brooks to Schooling, 20 May 1925.

<sup>49</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/4, letter from Schooling to Sale, 13 November 1925.

<sup>50</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/8/, letter from Stirling to Schooling, 16 November 1925.

given to the publisher by the first week of March "in order that we may be able to place the first volume of the Annals on sale in retail stores in Canada, including British Columbia, by the first of May this year [1926]."<sup>51</sup>

Schooling was no more successful at following through on that plan than he was on any of the others since the history project began. He was informed by letter on 29 May 1926 that the company had decided to abandon the project.<sup>52</sup> A month later he was asked to return everything he had completed to date, including his notes, to either Oxford University Press or the company.<sup>53</sup> The company had spent approximately £17,000 on this failed attempt at making its archives public.<sup>54</sup>

Schooling may not have succeeded in his attempts to publish the wealth of historical material in the possession of the Hudson's Bay Company, but he is the key to discovery of the company's archives and the opening of that treasure

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., letter from Stirling to Schooling, 19 January 1926.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., letter from Stirling to Schooling, 29 May 1926.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., letter from Stirling to Schooling, 30 June 1926.

<sup>54</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/1761 Secretary's Dead Dossiers c. 1920-74, Report on the Publication History of the H.B.C., 12 April 1932.

chest to an eager historical community. His overly ambitious attempt to publish a company history, although unsuccessful, left a good part of the company's records indexed and extracted in a format which provided future staff of the archives quick and efficient access to volumes of information. Over the six years that he was on the company's payroll, Schooling's priority changed from writing the history to promotion of a proper archives and ambitious archival publication programme. He strongly encouraged the establishment of a formal archives and publication of archival documents instead of an official history.

Unfortunately for Schooling the company only accepted the latter of these two proposals. His failure to complete the history probably convinced company officials that he was not the one to direct the publication programme. The company was not sympathetic to Schooling's idea of a company archives which would provide the sort of service to researchers which he had seen in North American archives such as the Public Archives. The company's extreme caution about opening its archives surfaced when researchers such as Professor Merk attempted to use the records. The company was not indifferent to its obligation to protect and make available its "great inheritance" of archives, but it wanted to do so on its own terms. In the early 1920s, the company moved slowly and hesitantly towards a policy of openness

when it acknowledged the importance of its archives beyond the confines of the business and promised to publish at least some of its archival records.

**Chapter 4: The Establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company  
Archives Department, 1926-1934**

Schooling's official history failed as a medium for providing information from the Hudson's Bay Company's archives. That project only underlined the difficulty of the company's archival dilemma. Schooling did, however, make clear to the company the nature of its archival problem: the extent and importance of its historical records, the inadequate arrangements for their administration in the company, and the growing international academic pressure to obtain better access to them.

The publication programme promised by the company in late 1924 eventually became an alternate means of attempting to resolve the archival problem after the failure of the official history project. The programme, however, did not get off the ground until 1926, when Canada's Dominion Archivist, Arthur Doughty, was hired to undertake it. Unfortunately, this strategy for discharging the company's archival obligation also failed. The programme was discontinued in 1930. The needs of this ambitious publication programme again accented the necessity of having a well-organised company archives. When the programme was discontinued, the company finally settled on a more liberal access policy as a means of making its archival information

available. The new policy represented a further effort to address the archival dilemma. The policy was a response to requests from the academic community for improved access to the archives and an attempt to reconcile the competing concerns of the company for both confidentiality and favourable publicity. It thus allowed outside researchers direct access to the least sensitive records (those created before 1870) without automatically permitting publication of information gleaned from them. From 1927 the company had the beginnings of a formal Archives Department, established to assist Doughty's publication programme and to enable researchers to have the wider direct access to the company's historical records which its new policy allowed.

Arthur Doughty had succeeded Douglas Brymner as Dominion Archivist in charge of the Public Archives in 1904. Doughty was soon noted for aggressive archival acquisition policies, which included an archival records copying programme in London and Paris.<sup>1</sup> Doughty's first trip to England in 1904 to solicit donations to the Public Archives of material relating to Canada from members of the British aristocracy was supported by Lord Strathcona, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. During a year-long visit to

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Heney, "London and Paris Offices," *The Archivist* 19, No. 2 (1992), 14-15. The programme of hand transcribing manuscripts and maps which was established in London and Paris continues today in the form of microfilming.

England in 1922-23, to solicit again such acquisitions, Doughty became connected with the Hudson's Bay Company archives.

When Doughty was in London in April 1923, he and Schooling suggested to Governor Kindersley the idea of publishing the contents of the Hudson's Bay Company archives. Schooling was aware, by this time, of the magnitude of the archival record of the company and of the immensity of the project he had undertaken in attempting to write a one volume history of the company. In the letter to Kindersley Schooling identified his concerns:

...the archives were put into some sort of shape and partially catalogued while I was in Canada, and it is only since my return that I have been able fully to judge of their nature. An incomplete catalogue consists of about four hundred foolscap typewritten pages.<sup>2</sup>

Schooling's scheme of publication "as a duty and a privilege of the Company to make the records public" included himself as editor-in-chief and appointment of Doughty and Dr. Adam Shortt, also of the Public Archives of Canada, as associate editors. He suggested "an advisory editorial board,

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<sup>2</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/11/4 Inventories, 1923 Index Catalogue of the Hudson's Bay Company Records. "Typed copy of the records of the HBC stored in the basement (office section) of the building at No. 1 Lime Street, London, E.C.3. It aims to cover everything on hand at the end of 1922, with the exception of records recently sent from Canada, January 1923." RG20/11/2 is a catalogue of the library prepared for Schooling, circa 1920, when he was writing the brochure ("original catalogue of Board Room as prepared at the direction of Sir William Schooling 1922, revised 1923").

consisting of about twenty of the principal historians in Canada, the United States, England and Scotland," Kindersley as chairman and vice presidents such as "the Prime Minister, past and present Governors of Canada and the like." He even suggested that the King of England would agree to become a patron! This was no small plan. Schooling proposed "something like two hundred volumes" over a period of ten or twelve years with a cost of £250,000 obtained through subscription. He also suggested a new building for the archives and a staff of fifteen. Schooling appealed to the business nature of the company by pointing out the publicity value of such a venture and predicted that "by doing this, great benefits, and nothing but benefits" would accrue for the company.<sup>3</sup>

The governor and board were not convinced by Schooling's enthusiasm. They insisted that he complete the history of the company as he had been commissioned and in the allotted time. As noted in the previous chapter, they did appoint a sub-committee to consider the publication of archival records at a later date.<sup>4</sup> Schooling persisted with his recommendations for publishing the archives and eventually suggested that, to eliminate any costs involved,

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<sup>3</sup> HBCA/PAM A.93/14 Confidential Files 1915-30, letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 5 April 1923.

<sup>4</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/166, fo. 208, 8 May 1923 and HBCA/PAM A.1/166, fo. 127, 5 June 1923.

the company could give "permission to some Society of the nature of the Champlain Society, to publish the archives subject to the veto of the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>5</sup>

The Champlain Society had been founded in 1905 in Toronto and, through subscriptions, offered publications relating to the history of Canada. Schooling had met George Wrong, a founding member of the society, on his trip to Canada and considered him one of the best historians in Canada. Wrong wrote to Schooling at the end of 1922 to return to the idea they had discussed of the Champlain Society publishing a book or books relating to the Hudson's Bay Company. Schooling forwarded the offer to J.C. Brooks, the company secretary, but Brooks was not prepared to accept the offer at that time.

The new governor, Charles Sale, met Dr. Doughty on his visit to Ottawa in 1925. There must have been serious discussion between the two regarding the company's archives because the London *Times* reported the following on 27 November 1925:

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<sup>5</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/2 London Office Correspondence 1919-32, letter from Schooling to Kindersley, 19 July 1923. Doughty was a member of the Champlain Society.

It is believed at Ottawa that Mr. Doughty, the Dominion Archivist, is likely to resign his office and go to England, in order to edit the papers of the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>6</sup>

A month later the *Ottawa Journal* published a long article on the possibility of the Canadian government losing an exemplary civil servant and "high-class brain." It feared Doughty would be lured away from service to his country by the promise of "first-class remuneration" from private business. The reporter exaggerated the details somewhat in the announcement, stating that:

...Dr. A.G. Doughty, Dominion Archivist, has received an invitation from the Hudson's Bay Company to take charge of the archives of that company in London; also the information has leaked out that the company offers Dr. Doughty something like double the salary which he received as the deputy minister of a Canadian Government department.<sup>7</sup>

The article went on to praise Doughty as having "a dynamic energy, an indomitable courage, and a public spirit which might be characterized as savage" and asked the question "what is to be done about Dr. Doughty's case?" From the time of Confederation the Government of Canada, restricted by the level of salaries offered, had had difficulty retaining qualified civil servants while "private business goes vigorously after what it perceives to be first-class value."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/misc./190, copy of newspaper clipping.

<sup>7</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/misc./185, copy of newspaper clipping.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Doughty must have been somewhat embarrassed by this outpouring of praise and conjecture. He immediately wrote to Governor Sale to explain: "I have tried to keep the matter quiet but it has got into the press and absurd statements have been made as to the great things offered to me....It cannot however do the Company any harm. On the contrary it considers it good business on the part of the Company."<sup>9</sup> In fact no firm arrangements had been made at this time between Doughty and the company and he was reluctant to leave Canada. The government was unstable, politically, during 1926 with the transfer of power from William Lyon Mackenzie King to Arthur Meighen and finally back to Mackenzie King with a majority in the fall of 1926. The Public Archives of Canada was without a minister for most of that time, and no one was prepared to take the Dominion Archivist's place.

Doughty did eventually get to London and in March 1926 he presented Sale with a draft of an agreement outlining a plan by which Doughty agreed to "undertake the direction and supervision of the classification and arrangement of the Records of the company with the assistance of your staff" while maintaining the confidentiality of any information of which he may have become aware regarding the business of the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., copy of letter from Doughty to Sale, 17 December 1925.

company. The agreement would not be effective without the consent of the Canadian prime minister. Doughty added that his "direction of the said work shall not imply a claim on the part of the Canadian Government; or of others, to the benefit of my knowledge of the affairs of the Company, or to copy extracts of information of any kind, relating to its records."<sup>10</sup> The rate of pay was to be £300 a year.<sup>11</sup>

Prime Minister Mackenzie King approved the arrangement in October and the company finalised the agreement in December with the first monthly payment to Doughty. No report of the classification work completed by Doughty has been found in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives but in February 1928 he wrote to Sale from the Public Record Office in London to encourage publication of material from the archives: "Now that the records of your numerous posts have been assembled and it is possible to make selections for publication, I shall be pleased to assist you in any way possible."<sup>12</sup> Doughty must have worked on the

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<sup>10</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/2404, letter from Doughty to Sale, 17 March 1926.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., letter from Doughty to Sale, 2 April 1926.

<sup>12</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/misc./194, copy of letter from [Doughty] to Sale, 14 February 1928. Copies of a number of letters from Doughty to the company were found in various files. Although Doughty is not identified on the typed copy I have determined from the dates and content that they are in fact from Doughty. Doughty's handwriting is quite illegible and copies were probably made to make the letters more readable to company staff.

classification of the records at Beaver House where they had been given separate accommodation when they were moved in 1926 from No. 1 Lime Street.

In April 1928 new publication arrangements were made with the Canadian Historical Society of England and its founder Sir Campbell Stuart.<sup>13</sup> Sale informed the Canadian Committee of the plans and, tellingly, revealed something of the company's awareness of the public relations value of its archives:

We have agreed to combine with this Society in the publication of our records, whilst still retaining control through the fact that we take the monetary risk. In publishing under the auspices of the Society we shall benefit by the prestige of the great names among its members.<sup>14</sup>

The new publication scheme was devised in a manner which attempted to resolve some of the company's archival problems. Publication of the archival records themselves would make a wider range of archival information available than could be published in a single official history. Thus the obligation to preserve "the great inheritance" of company archives could be fulfilled and the company could enjoy whatever "prestige" that may have brought it. At the

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<sup>13</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/169, fo. 171, 13 March 1928. The Canadian Historical Society had been formed at Doughty's initiative in order to facilitate the acquisition by the Public Archives of records related to Canadian history which were in the custody of members of the British aristocracy.

<sup>14</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/1758, letter from Sale to the Canadian Committee, 27 April 1928.

same time, the company would still control access to the information in the records because it retained the final say on which ones would be published.

Doughty was to be editor with associate or consulting editors appointed from western Canada. The Canadian Committee in Winnipeg reminded the governor of the importance of this selection:

There is an unfortunate tendency in eastern Canada, particularly in Ottawa, to forget the West and it is thought that the Company should not adopt this attitude which has been the cause of considerable feeling at different times that could be avoided.<sup>15</sup>

The editorial committee was eventually made up of Chester Martin from Manitoba (later to move to the University of Toronto), A.S. Morton from Saskatchewan, and A.L. Burt from Alberta, all professors of history.<sup>16</sup> Doughty advised the company "that Mr. William Smith should be sent from the Public Archives to assist in the selection and editing of documents which you decide to publish." He added that Smith's "salary should be augmented or that a fixed fee should be paid to him by your Company for the work he would perform outside the usual working hours."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/1758, letter from Canadian Committee to Sale, 14 May 1928.

<sup>16</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/1761, Publication History of the H.B.C., 12 April 1932.

<sup>17</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/misc./194, copy of letter from [Doughty] to Sale, 14 February 1928.

William Smith spent about three months in London preparing the Simpson journals for publication. Unfortunately, he encountered the same difficulties as Schooling had with the immense amount of material in the company archives and a limited amount of time to prepare it. He continued the editing process after his return to Ottawa in October but by January 1929 he was "finding the editing of the Journal far more difficult than he had anticipated."<sup>18</sup> The draft text was finally ready in February but when Chester Martin read it he was "not at all satisfied"<sup>19</sup> and Doughty was disappointed. Considerable work was carried out in preparing five volumes of documents from the Hudson's Bay Company archives for this phase of publication readiness but only the first volume of Simpson's journals was prepared to the proof stage.

Doughty had to cancel two trips to London that year and in August 1930 Sale wrote to inform him that "in view of the length of time which it is taking to place our records in order we have decided to make a change, and in doing so desire to terminate on the 30th September, the arrangement made with you in April, 1926."<sup>20</sup> Another four years had

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<sup>18</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/misc./199, letter from Doughty to Sale, 16 January 1929.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/2402, copy of letter from [Sale] to Doughty, 7 August 1930.

passed with no publication yet in sight and another £4000 expended.

Although the work on publication had been discontinued, the archives had become better organised in order to support that work. Richard Leveson Gower, who was the only company employee working on the archival material in the immediate aftermath of the discontinuation of the publication programme, reported in February 1931 that a great benefit had come out of locating the records in one place on the sixth floor of Hudson's Bay House. It had been possible to arrange and classify them and "it is at least possible to say now, that we are acquainted with the Company's documentary possessions during the first 200 years of their history."<sup>21</sup>

Leveson Gower had initially been employed in connection with the records in the fall of 1923 when he was twenty-nine years old. In January 1924 he was introduced to William Schooling in a letter from P.D. Stirling, the London manager, on behalf of the governor and committee. When Schooling was arranging to move into the house at Elvaston Place, Stirling suggested that "...it would be advisable for Mr. Leveson Gower to be responsible here for all documents

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<sup>21</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/1/14, Memorandum from Leveson Gower to Graham, 25 February 1931.

sent to you."<sup>22</sup> For the next two years Leveson Gower arranged for records to be delivered to and returned from Schooling. He was sent to Canada for four months in 1927 to familiarize himself with the company in North America and to arrange for the transfer of inactive records to London. Although there is no itinerary in the company archives' files for his trip it is evident from correspondence that he at least visited Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Victoria, coinciding, at times, with Governor Sale's trip to Canada and the United States.<sup>23</sup>

Leveson Gower was also one of the team of four staff members who read, arranged, and made extracts of information from the post journals, minutes books, and letterbooks (1670-1820) for Schooling's history. The extracts and notes did not represent every incident of interest in the history of the company but illustrated the information to be found in the records and formed a good basis for knowledge of the chronological occurrence of events. They eventually filled twenty-six volumes.<sup>24</sup> Subject indexes of the extracts were also prepared. According to a report on the "old records

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<sup>22</sup> HBCA/PAM A.92/167/7, letter from Stirling to Schooling, 3 January 1924.

<sup>23</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/1/9 Archives Department Correspondence and Memoranda (London), 1927.

<sup>24</sup> These "Annals" have been bound and are classified as RG20/6, Research Tools.

and archives" prepared by Secretary J.C. Brooks in 1933, Leveson Gower was engaged from 1926 to 1928 in answering the numerous inquiries about the records received primarily from North America. Despite the fact that quite a bit of ordering and extracting had been accomplished during the previous four years, the archives still lacked an adequate general catalogue for researchers to use. When researchers inquired into the holdings, the practice had been to identify relevant records on a particular subject from which extracts of information were provided to the researcher. In this way resource material was accumulated and was available for future inquiries, but direct access to the records by outside researchers was not permitted.

This state of affairs disturbed Leveson Gower. In the February 1931 report he very diplomatically broached the subject of accessibility. He said that "in view of the fact that it has been decided temporarily to suspend publication...it has occurred to me that it would be much appreciated in many quarters if, at some future time, the Board would consider the possibility of rendering the Company's Records accessible to Students."<sup>25</sup> Leveson Gower referred to that memo in a subsequent report as the reason for the board making the decision on 12 May 1931 to

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<sup>25</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/1/14, Memorandum from Leveson Gower to Graham, 25 February 1931.

liberalise access to the archives:

In view of the decision to postpone the question of publication of the Company's Archives, it was decided that the Company's Archives prior to 1870 should be rendered available for inspection by students of history and others, at the discretion of Mr. Leveson Gower, the Company's Archivist.<sup>26</sup>

This is a significant turning point in the history of access to the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company. For the first time, as a matter of formal policy, researchers were to be allowed direct access to records created before 1870. They were still not granted the right to publish information from these records without company approval. However, in a second major change in access regulations, the company ended the tight control over the right to publish information from the archives which the company governors had heretofore retained. It decided to delegate implementation of the access policy to the company archivist, Leveson Gower, who was known as a strong advocate of liberal terms of access to researchers. The first application for access to the archives came in September 1931 from Mr. J.B. Tyrrell, a well-known Canadian surveyor and geologist, who wished to research Philip Turnor's surveys and the journal of Joseph Howse with the intention of publication. The board replied to the request by deciding "that access to the documents referred should be afforded to Mr. Tyrrell, and that,

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<sup>26</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/169, fo. 254, 12 May 1931.

subject to revision by Mr. Leveson Gower, extracts from them might be published."<sup>27</sup>

This more liberal approach to access and to publication of material in the Hudson's Bay Company archives was one more step in the development of an archival function for the company. By the early 1930s the company had an Archives Department and conferred the title of Company Archivist on Leveson Gower. With the move to Hudson's Bay House at Bishopsgate in 1928, the archives had been given adequate space to be stored in an order that made their access more efficient. The records finally settled in the basement of Hudson's Bay House where new shelving was provided and the records could be removed from the packing cases in which they had been stored and moved. The inability of the previous two strategies (the official company history and Doughty's publication programme) to deal with the archival dilemma, combined with academic pressure to loosen restrictions on access and publication, had prompted the company to ease its practices in these areas. If the benefits of the archives were to be obtained, a policy permitting outside researchers direct access to the records in order to publish information from them was the only alternative. But this approach implied that the company archives should be able to provide the service needed to

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<sup>27</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/171, fo. 31, 22 September 1931.

implement these policies. The company archives, which had developed as a subordinate aspect of the two publication efforts in the 1920s, emerged in the early 1930s, under an able archivist, Richard Leveson Gower, as a distinct departmental service with a mandate to encourage access and publication.

Acknowledgment of the importance of the company's historical and current records became policy at about this same time. On 16 May 1933 the Minutes Book records:

It was agreed that the respective managements in London and in Canada be instructed to examine all the Company's records with a view to providing for continuity of collection of all documents for preservation in the Company's Archives at the London Head Office.<sup>28</sup>

Philip Chester, chief accountant, was asked to investigate the situation of records in Canada and a few months later a list of documents considered by the board to be of sufficient importance to be included permanently in the company's archives was sent to the Canadian Committee. The archives was also included as a formal part of the company's public relations wing and viewed as an important source of historical information which could inspire employee morale and loyalty. Douglas MacKay, who had been in charge of advertising, public relations, and *The Beaver* magazine, was given supervision of the archives and records in the

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<sup>28</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/171/196, 16 May 1933.

Canadian office. In 1934 Brooks reported that any Canadian staff visiting London were being shown "something of our Archives Department and various items of interest contained therein. We have been gratified at the keen interest taken by the Canadian staff in our Archives and the history of the Company."<sup>29</sup>

In 1932, with the intention of making the archives more accessible to outside researchers, the new governor, Patrick Ashley Cooper, suggested that Leveson Gower contact the Public Record Office in order to obtain someone to "inspect our methods of filing, storing, tabulating, etc., the records, and to advise us whether we are doing all that is necessary in that respect and in the right manner, and if not, to advise us as to the best way in which the work should be done to make the records available for the use of students."<sup>30</sup> The company invited Hilary Jenkinson and Professor Reginald Coupland to inspect the archives and records "with a view to making suggestions regarding the most efficient methods of cataloguing and preserving them and of rendering them available to students in as adequate a

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<sup>29</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102/194, memorandum from Secretary to Canadian Committee, 9 February 1934.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/18, memorandum from Secretary to Leveson Gower, 11 May 1932.

manner as possible...."<sup>31</sup> Coupland was a Professor of Colonial History at Oxford University. Jenkinson was an archivist at the Public Record Office and author of a *Manual of Archive Administration*, which was published in 1922, and is still recognised as a classic work in the field of archival administration.

Jenkinson and Coupland's recommendations included conservation measures for the repository and its contents and the installation of steel shelving for archival storage. Jenkinson offered to provide specifications for a shelving system similar to the one used in the Public Record Office. On the subject of public access both Coupland and Jenkinson said that strict supervision would be necessary. Jenkinson's philosophy, as set out in his *Manual*, said the archivist was "the servant of his Archives first and afterwards of the Student Public."<sup>32</sup> It is not surprising then to read in Jenkinson's report to the Hudson's Bay Company that "...before any general policy of admission of the public is adopted or (at least) announced...,"<sup>33</sup> a

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<sup>31</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/8, memorandum from Leveson Gower to Secretary, 20 May 1932.

<sup>32</sup> Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922): 106.

<sup>33</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/18, Report on Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company, 2 June 1932.

summary of the collection inventory would be prepared, a catalogue number be attached to every item in the inventory, and the catalogue numbers should be listed in order. In addition, every document produced for inspection would have to be stamped with the company's name. Jenkinson had made this point very clear in his *Manual*: "Until some such numbering work as the above has been undertaken, it is not, we must repeat, safe for either the Archivist or the Public to be allowed to deal further with the documents."<sup>34</sup> J.C. Brooks reported these recommendations to the board which agreed to all the proposals including the purchase of steel shelving, further expenditures regarding fire protection and lighting fixtures, and steps to complete cataloguing and "marking" the archives in order to make "certain of them available to the public."<sup>35</sup>

In 1933 Leveson Gower reported on the work that had been completed since 1922, when Schooling had insisted on some organisation of the records to aid his writing of the company history. The 385 page catalogue of the records which had been compiled when the records were stored at No. 1 Lime Street was still in use but was out of date for locating material. "None of the boxes - with the exception

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<sup>34</sup> Jenkinson, 73.

<sup>35</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/171, fo. 121, 27 September 1932.

of a few containing correspondence subsequent to 1870 - are still in use as the contents have been extracted and sorted into Files, etc.<sup>36</sup> One hundred and eighty pages of galley proofs for the "Annals" were still set up (and would be until 1937); post journals were arranged alphabetically by name of post, then chronologically within each category, and indexed; letters inward had been bound in chronological order; and almost two hundred boxes of records received from Canada since 1922 had been unpacked and sorted. A card index and subject search file were being compiled from information retrieved while answering research inquiries. Post books other than journals had been divided into three sections: Correspondence Books, District Statements, and Miscellaneous Account Books. Material relating to areas of individual interest had been arranged accordingly. For instance books relating to the Puget's Sound Agricultural Society, Limited, and records pertaining to Sir George Simpson were brought together. Miscellaneous papers and letters which did not fit into any of the identified categories were arranged chronologically.

With this arrangement in hand, Leveson Gower met again with Hilary Jenkinson in March 1933 to discuss the appropriate classification of the Hudson's Bay Company

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<sup>36</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/5/12, Work Completed by the Records Department since 1922, 4 February 1933.

records. They developed a plan which reflected both the existing order and Jenkinson's theories of classification based on the administrative provenance of the records as explained in his *Manual*. The first division of classification was by section (or broad administrative origin), and within each section by class (or company records keeping system), and then by piece (or individual document). The records were divided into Section A. London Office records, Section B. Hudson's Bay Company establishments and administrative headquarters in North America, Section C. Ships, Section D. Operational records of Rupert's Land, Section E. Companies connected with or subsidiary to the Hudson's Bay Company, and Section Z. Miscellaneous. These new arrangements were not dissimilar to the previous order so it would not be an onerous task to rearrange the records. More work would be required to foliate, stamp, and label the records once they were ordered.

Between 1933 and 1935, Leveson Gower, as archivist of the company, wrote a series of articles about the archives for the popular company magazine, *The Beaver*.<sup>37</sup> The series indicates that the company was finally willing to publicise widely information about its archival holdings and the work

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<sup>37</sup> See bibliography for full citation of articles.

that had been accomplished in organising them for research purposes. Leveson Gower's articles solicited research inquiries and reflected the company's new commitment to a formal, professionally organised archives.

**Chapter 5: The Hudson's Bay Company Archives Department,  
1934-1964**

By the 1930s the Hudson's Bay Company fully appreciated the importance of its archives both for historical research and favourable publicity. Although the company encouraged interest in the archives by persons outside the company, the location of the archives in London presented access problems for researchers who were, for the most part, in North America. A considerable amount of time and expense was required to enable researchers to use the archives effectively in London for major research projects. The company demonstrated concern about this problem by launching another major effort to publish the holdings of the archives. It established the Hudson's Bay Record Society for that purpose in 1938.

The record society publication programme, however, pointed to still unresolved problems relating to access to the company archives. One of the remaining restrictions on access to the company's archives, the company's right to deny publication of information obtained from its records, again created problems for researchers by the late 1930s. The company's readiness to deny permission to publish information from its archives, in order to protect its own new publication programme, indicates that access was still a

problem. The 1931 policy had gone a long way towards resolving the company's archival dilemma. The new publication programme, however, created a new roadblock in the way of direct access to the archives and liberal permission to publish research information from the archives. The company did not want to jeopardise whatever publicity and profit its own publications would bring to it by allowing researchers to prepare competitive publications.

The company's new Hudson's Bay Record Society publication programme existed until 1983. It became evident to the company soon after the programme began that the researchers' interest in access to the company archives and in permission to publish information found therein was not a danger to the company's publication plans. Indeed, the company's experience with outside historical researchers was a positive one in the mid-twentieth century. Although the company did not formally change the access policy developed in the 1930s, it applied it liberally during the following years. By the late 1960s the company was even willing to consider relinquishing custody of its archives to a Canadian repository and formally making access and publication rights much more liberal than the earlier policy allowed. During the mid-twentieth century the company's approach to access and publication enabled it to fulfil its archival obligation

to historical research without jeopardising the public relations value of the archives.

In 1934 publication of archival records was once again raised with the Board of Directors by Chadwick Brooks and Leveson Gower. Brooks prepared a report for the governor on this matter on 7 March. He noted that this had come up in discussions held with Leveson Gower and Canadian Professor A.S. Morton, who had spent fourteen months at the Hudson's Bay Company archives from June 1933 to August 1934 researching material for his subsequent publication *A History of Western Canada*:

It has occurred to us, however, that it might be worth considering as to whether the Canadian Historical Society might not undertake the formation of a kind of subsidiary society, somewhat on the lines of the Champlain Society, which might be known by some such name as the "Churchill Society".<sup>1</sup>

Brooks and Leveson Gower prepared another report on the same subject in November 1934. They pointed out that the company would have to decide whether to undertake publication itself or to arrange for an independent organisation to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/164, 7 March 1934. The original suggestion for the name of the proposed society was made by Leveson Gower in a memo to Brooks dated 1/3/34 (RG20/2/164) and on the original memo from Brooks to the governor the words "or HBC" were pencilled in between "Churchill" and "Society" by an unidentified annotator. Some of the enthusiasm might have developed from daily contact with A.S. Morton while he carried out research for his book *A History of Western Canada*. A handwritten note labelled "Professor Morton's Views on Hudson's Bay Company Publications" dated 14/7/34 can be found in the same file.

Significantly, they argued that, regardless of the approach adopted, company archival policy ought to strive to achieve the two purposes which it had had trouble reconciling in the past:

The question...is what steps the Company should take in connection with the publication of its archives, two points being kept in mind, namely - (a) placing the unique archival material within the reach of all students of history and others by publication [and] (b) securing to the Company all possible publicity and prestige in connection with such publication.<sup>2</sup>

Discussions also had been renewed with Sir Campbell Stuart, Chairman of the Canadian History Society of the British Isles, but he neither thought that the financial climate was opportune for the company to consider publication nor did he consider a separate society to be the answer to the problem.<sup>3</sup> Brooks kept pressing the proposal:

There has been a general feeling for some time that the Company should consider the question of publishing the official history because of - (a) the growing interest in the Canadian North as evidence by the publication each year of books referring to the Company, (b) the increasing numbers of students in Canadian and American Universities who are researching into fur trade and other North American history with a view to publication, (c) the Company's position as owner of the most important volume of material regarding Canadian Western and Northern history involving some obligation towards the history of Canada and of the Fur Trade.<sup>4</sup>

The pressure to publish eventually had an effect because on 22 January 1935 the Minutes Book recorded:

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<sup>2</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/164, report on Archives and History - Publication, 14 November 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., memorandum from Brooks, 16 March 1934.

<sup>4</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/164, report, 14 November 1934.

The Board generally agreed in principle with the following recommendations:

(a) that an HBC Society be formed to undertake publication of the Company's Archives and that a pamphlet inviting membership be issued over the name of influential sponsors representative of the UK and North America.

(b) that a small provisional committee be appointed, with Sir Campbell Stuart as Chairman, to decide the terms of the pamphlet and to arrange adequate circulation;

(c) that an executive committee be subsequently appointed with a Director of Publications (part-time) and an Honorary Secretary;

(d) that the volumes published by the society be available only to members and not offered on sale to the General public;

(e) that an official history of the Company be published subsequently;

Sir Edward Peacock intimated that Sir Campbell Stuart had readily agreed to undertake the chairmanship of the Provisional Committee.<sup>5</sup>

The decision had been made to form a society to facilitate publication, but it would be another three years before the provisional committee submitted its recommendations and the society was incorporated.

In the meantime, an incident occurred which points to the remaining limits on the company's willingness to allow publication of information from its archives. In 1936 Douglas MacKay, former editor of *The Beaver*, published a history of the Hudson's Bay Company entitled *The Honourable Company*. It was advertised as the first history to be written with full access to the company archives. MacKay,

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<sup>5</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/209, Minute 4587, 22 January 1935. See also RG20/2/164.

as has been noted earlier, was an employee of the company, first in Montreal and then at the head office in Winnipeg, where he was in charge of the company's general advertising, public relations, internal relations, and *The Beaver* magazine.<sup>6</sup> MacKay paid his respects to the company in the foreword of the first edition of his book: "To the Governor and Committee of the Company I am indebted for the use of much original material from the archive in London."<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, this publication surprised the London Office. The board sent the Canadian Committee "an expression of the Board's surprise and disappointment that the Committee should have permitted a history of the Company to be written and published in the United States of America by a member of the Company's staff without the knowledge of the Board...."<sup>8</sup> Four months later another edition of the book was published by Cassell and Company of England and the board was once again caught by surprise. It expressed "disappointment at the failure of the Canadian Committee adequately to control the action of their officers in this matter. The Board further agreed that, in the circumstances

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<sup>6</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/171, Minute 133, 25 October 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas MacKay. *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1966): Foreword to the 1936 Edition.

<sup>8</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/170, copy of extract from Minutes of the Board Meeting, 6 October 1936.

they could not assume any responsibility for this publication."<sup>9</sup>

The episode prompted the company, once again, to tighten control of access to its records. Secretary J.C. Brooks immediately reminded the company archivist, Leveson Gower:

In connection with the publication of our Archives, I would remind you that, as previously discussed between us, all inquiries for historical information from our Archives must be carefully scrutinized...All requests for information in regard to which there is any doubt as to its value from the point of view of publication of our Archives must be referred to Sir Campbell Stuart before we make any reply.<sup>10</sup>

Brooks also expressed this view to the Canadian Committee. He reminded it of the need to protect the company's own new publication programme. He advised the committee that "no archival data which may be regarded as of value in connection with our own scheme should be issued in future"<sup>11</sup> and in this regard enclosed a list of documents from which no information was to be issued.

Pressure to reduce access to outside researchers in order to protect the publication programme also came from

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., copy of extract from Minutes of Board Meeting, 9 February 1937.

<sup>10</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/164, memo from Brooks to Leveson Gower, 13 February 1936.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., memo from Brooks to Canadian Committee, 5 March 1937.

another source. E.E. Rich, who was a Fellow of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, and had been appointed the first editor of what would become the Hudson's Bay Record Society, became aware of the fact that the number of inquiries being made of the Archives Department was increasing as "the scope and accessibility of the Company's archives became generally known."<sup>12</sup> He was concerned that the time required to answer these requests would take the archives' staff away from the classification work which was required to make the records available for publication purposes. As a result he suggested "that rules be instituted which will discourage casual inquiries and which will provide a system for regulating the procedure in answering serious inquiries."<sup>13</sup> His proposal included a scale of charges, not to include students working in the archives in person, and a list of documents to which access would not be allowed, reserving "the coherent, formative narrative...for the Company's own publication."<sup>14</sup>

The board approved the proposed access rules and charges in December 1937 and "Rules and Regulations Governing Admission to Research" were appended to the

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<sup>12</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/5/14, letter from Rich to Brooks, 1 June 1937.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

minutes as follows:

Rules and Regulations governing admission to Research.

- i) Except under special circumstances, only the Records of the Hudson's Bay Company up to the year 1870, the date of the Deed of Surrender of Rupert's Land to the Crown, shall be available for inspection. Documents dated after 1870 shall be produced only on such conditions as the Governor and Committee shall determine.
- ii) Inspection of the Records is permitted on the express condition that any information obtained therefrom shall be submitted to the Company for approval prior to publication.
- iii) Applications to work on the Archives must indicate the definite subject of the proposed research; applications in respect of vague or general subjects cannot be considered.
- iv) Any abstracts taken from the Archives with the Archivist's permission, should be brief and limited to extracts strictly pertinent to the subject in question.
- v) No 'general collection' of documents or extracts therefrom can be permitted in any circumstances.
- vi) No extracts taken from the Archives may be transmitted to third parties without the Company's prior permission.
- vii) No extracts taken from the Archives may be deposited in University or other Libraries without the Company's prior permission.
- viii) Students are reminded that they work on the Archives by the courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company and that the Company itself has undertaken the duty of making its records public.

The Company, therefore, discourages the publication of documents or excerpts except by itself and in this matter expects the co-operation of students.<sup>15</sup>

On 29 April 1938, the Hudson's Bay Record Society was incorporated with the Hudson's Bay Company owning all the shares and providing the necessary finances. The details of the recommendations of the provisional committee had been

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<sup>15</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/210, fo. 41, 14 December 1937, Appendix.

presented to the board on 27 July 1937. At that time the following was approved:

- i) that a society be formed with the designation "The Hudson's Bay Record Society" with an annual subscription of One Guinea in the United Kingdom and Five Dollars in North America, for which each subscriber would receive one volume per annum;
- ii) that copies be available only to the members of the Society, this being in accord also with the policy governing the issue of the volumes of the Champlain Society;
- iii) that the first volume, the subject of which would be George Simpson's Athabasca Journal and Report, 1820/21, be published annually on such dates as will accord with the Champlain Society's publication arrangements for their volumes;
- iv) that the co-operation of the Canadian Committee be obtained in connection with securing members for the new Society, and their views and suggestions invited in regard to limiting the number of members....<sup>16</sup>

The company concluded an agreement with the Champlain Society to publish the company's records. The society would "at its own expense, prepare and edit in every year one volume of the records and archives of the Hudson's Bay Company..., the form and contents thereof... subject to agreement between the Record Society and the Champlain Society."<sup>17</sup>

The publications would only be distributed to members of each society. The first volume of the Hudson's Bay Record Society publications, entitled *Journal of Occurrences in*

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<sup>16</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/210, fo. 19, 27 July 1937.

<sup>17</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102, Box 218F, Agreement dated 20 June 1938.

*the Athabasca Department by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report,* edited by Rich, was issued to members in November 1938.<sup>18</sup> This arrangement with the Champlain Society remained in place until 1950, when the Hudson's Bay Company became solely responsible for publication.<sup>19</sup>

Rich continued as editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society until 1959. He wrote a *History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670 - 1870* in volumes twenty-one and twenty-two in the series. The subsequent volumes were published biennially. Rich's successors as editors were K.G. Davies and Glyndwr Williams. They received considerable editorial assistance from Alice Johnson, first as assistant archivist, and then as the company archivist from 1950 to 1968. When the Hudson's Bay Company archives moved to Canada in 1974, Hartwell Bowsfield of Toronto became the editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society. In 1983, after 33 volumes had been published, the society was dissolved. The Rupert's Land Research Centre, based in Winnipeg, continues the promotion of the publication of Canadian history from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

The Second World War interrupted the progress of the

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<sup>18</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/210, fo. 114, 13 December 1938.

<sup>19</sup> HBCA/PAM A.102, Box 218F, extract of Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 18 May 1949, and 18 May 1950.

Archives Department. After considering and rejecting a proposal to microfilm a large number of the most valuable records to protect them from war damage, the board recommended "that arrangements be made for the removal of the Archives to a safer location in any emergency."<sup>20</sup> Packing cases were ordered and Leveson Gower prepared to relocate older and more vulnerable records which would not be required for either classification or publication. Secretary J.C. Brooks provided the following directions: "The cases, when packed, can be retained in the vacant space at 52 Bishopsgate, corresponding to the Archives Department accommodation at 68, Bishopsgate, ready for transport to the country when we are ready for the move."<sup>21</sup> The archives was transferred to Governor Cooper's estate, Hexton Manor in Hertfordshire, about forty miles north east of London, where the records remained safe from air raids on London. The bulk of the archives had been removed by July 1939.<sup>22</sup>

Leveson Gower was called up for war service in 1939. Alice Johnson carried on the work of the Archives Department with the help of T.A. Mayhew. Johnson had joined the

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<sup>20</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/1, copy of extract from Minutes of Board Meeting, 14 February 1939.

<sup>21</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/1, memorandum from Secretary to Leveson Gower, 18 April 1939.

<sup>22</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/1/21, memorandum from Leveson Gower, 18 July 1939.

company in 1926 as a junior secretary. Within two years she was transferred to the Archives Department. She left the company in 1930 to work for an advertising agency but returned in 1934 to take up the duties of the assistant archivist.<sup>23</sup> In the absence of Leveson Gower during the war, Johnson listed her duties for the secretary in September 1939:

Carrying out research work and assembling the information on behalf of correspondents' or departmental enquiries; typing and indexing of the various catalogues compiled by Mr. Leveson Gower; filing; keeping up to date Library catalogue; attending to visiting students in the absence of Mayhew. Over the last year a considerable amount of time has been spent on research work and typing for the Hudson's Bay Record Society.<sup>24</sup>

Mayhew was charged with:

Labelling and boxing of classified records; keeping in order both classified and unclassified records; attending to the requirements of visiting students; general duties such as keeping clean and tidy the rooms used by the Archives Department; packing and making preparations for the loading and unloading of boxes during the move to Hexton.<sup>25</sup>

The archives was at Hexton Manor until 1945 when the secretary notified Johnson and Mayhew that "with the cessation of hostilities the way is now clear for bringing

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<sup>23</sup> "Bay Personality No. 5," *The Bay* (Summer 1948): 30-31.

<sup>24</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/1/21, memorandum from Alice Johnson to Secretary, 7 September 1939.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

back to Bishopsgate from Hexton all the archives which have been stored in the country for safe custody."<sup>26</sup>

Although requests declined considerably throughout the war period, the archives staff continued to answer inquiries. Johnson devoted all of her time to helping Harvey Fleming, assistant editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society. When he left in 1940, she took over that job. Mayhew, in the meantime, travelled between London and Hexton to consult or retrieve documents and to check on the conditions of storage. There were a few incidents of dampness (the records were stored in the wine cellar), mildew, and insect infestation, all of which were dealt with promptly. Some boxes were returned to Hudson's Bay House for cleaning.<sup>27</sup> Once again, Hilary Jenkinson of the Public Record Office was consulted for his opinion on these conservation problems.<sup>28</sup>

Leveson Gower returned in February 1947 to carry on as the company archivist. In October of that year he drafted a memo for Chadwick Brooks providing staffing requirements for

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<sup>26</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/1, memorandum from Secretary to Johnson and Mayhew, 16 May 1945.

<sup>27</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/10/1, notes inside Accession Register 1938-1974.

<sup>28</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/1, copy of memorandum from Secretary to Johnson, 11 March 1942.

the Archives Department. He suggested a staff of six to include himself, Johnson as assistant archivist, two other assistants, one being Mayhew, plus a typist and one other clerical assistant. The classification of the records prior to 1870 had been completed with the exception of miscellaneous papers of subsidiary companies. Leveson Gower expected that work to be completed by the end of 1948 when the work on the 1870-1920 period could be started.<sup>29</sup>

Leveson Gower left the service of the company rather suddenly in January 1949 after the death of his father. The company archivist's duties were described by R.A. Reynolds, the new company secretary, in a notice inviting applicants for the position:

Hudson's Bay Company - Applications are invited for the appointment of ARCHIVIST to the Company. Commencing salary between £450 and £550, according to age, qualifications and experience, rising to £750 a year. Candidates preferably between 30 and 35 years of age, must be graduates with sufficient experience of, and taste for historical research to assist in the preparation of material for publication.<sup>30</sup>

On 9 March 1949 G. Potter James was appointed company archivist by the board at the salary of £550.<sup>31</sup> This

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<sup>29</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/1/22, memorandum from Archivist to Brooks, 6 October 1947.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA/PAM Unclassified Archives Department General, undated note signed by R.A. Reynolds, Secretary.

<sup>31</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/122, fo. 272, 9 March 1949. Leveson Gower had been making £380 immediately before the war. (HBCA/PAM A.102/228e)

arrangement was short-lived. The minutes of the board meeting of 11 January 1950 record Potter's resignation and the appointment of "Miss Alice Johnson as Archivist of the Company at a remuneration of £525."<sup>32</sup> It seems that the company had been hesitant to appoint Johnson and sought outside advice on the matter. A letter to Sir Hilary Jenkinson from R.A. Reynolds reads:

I would like to thank you for your kindness in granting me an interview last week and also for the advice which you gave me in regard to the running of our Archives Department and the appointment of an Archivist. I am sure you will be interested to hear that the Board have now appointed Miss Johnson to be the Company's new Archivist.<sup>33</sup>

Johnson's detailed monthly and annual reports record the department's work for the next 18 years. The staff in 1949 included Johnson, Miss Kemp, typist, Mayhew, assistant, and Mr. Harvey, assistant.<sup>34</sup>

Johnson ably continued the work of Leveson Gower. She noted that the advice Jenkinson had offered in 1932 had provided the Hudson's Bay Company archives with a workable system of classification which she continued to use: "Sir Hilary Jenkinson's recommendations as to the Sections and Classes used in Classification have...been followed, and the

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<sup>32</sup> HBCA/PAM A.1/122, fo. 339, 11 January 1950.

<sup>33</sup> HBCA/PAM Unclassified Archives Department General, letter from Reynolds to Johnson, 13 January 1952.

<sup>34</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/118, memo from Archivist to Secretary, 30 April 1949.

experience gained has enabled us to fit into the system the different kinds of documents to be found in the Company's archives."<sup>35</sup>

After the war the company archives attracted a great number of researchers. They became such a regular part of the daily routine to the point that during the summer months the work tables were not available for sorting and classifying because they were taken by researchers. In 1950 Johnson, though still busy with preparing records for publication by the record society, welcomed the growing number of researchers: "We welcome these visitors for we can not only help them, but we ourselves learn quite a lot from our exchange of ideas."<sup>36</sup> Despite the concerns of the late 1930s, there was no serious conflict between the company's publication programme and the interests of researchers.

The company's decision in 1950 to microfilm records dating from before 1870 also suggests that it was no longer greatly concerned about the possible conflict between the company's and researchers' interest in publishing its records. W.Kaye Lamb initiated the microfilming project.

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<sup>35</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/119, memorandum from Archivist to Secretary, 4 January 1950.

<sup>36</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/119, 22 September 1950.

Lamb, a distinguished archivist, librarian, and historian, had been appointed Canada's Dominion Archivist in 1948. Preservation was a priority for him. Noting the importance of the Hudson's Bay Company to the history of Canada, he drew up an agreement with the company in 1950 to microfilm its records from 1670 to 1870. A copy of the microfilm would be deposited at the Public Archives of Canada. Access to the company's historical records was still an issue to researchers in North America. Lamb's proposal would permit easier access, but he acknowledged the company's control over the use of records:

While the primary purpose of the microfilm copies would be to provide against possible destruction of the originals, my hope is that we could take advantage of their existence to make the contents of the documents somewhat more accessible to well-known scholars in Canada. Needless to say I recognize fully the Company's absolute proprietorship of the papers, and its right to prevent their use for any purpose that might be detrimental to its interests.<sup>37</sup>

This reassurance no doubt helped win the company's support for the microfilming project, although the mere fact that the records would be more readily available in North America on microfilm indicates that the company was prepared to entertain and approve more requests for publication of information from the records. By 1953 the microfilm project was well under way and Lamb could report to the Canadian

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<sup>37</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.3.1, letter from Lamb to Reynolds, 28 July 1950.

Historical Association that "over 650 reels of film, consisting of facsimiles of over 450,000 pages, have already been received in Ottawa."<sup>38</sup> He expected the microfilming project would be completed by the end of 1954. The project Lamb proposed was not completed until 1966. By 1966 the records of the Hudson's Bay Company archives from 1670 to 1870 were available in two locations -- the originals in London and microfilm in Ottawa. There were at that time 1858 reels, all pre-1870.<sup>39</sup>

Conditions governing the use of the microfilm at the Public Archives of Canada were published in *The Beaver* in 1951 and reflected the rules for access to the archives themselves. Application had to be made to the company and written acceptance of the conditions was required from all users. A special committee was established in Winnipeg to screen all applications before they were forwarded to London. The committee, in operation from 1951-65, was composed of company representatives Ross Mitchell and F.B. Walker (who was later replaced by A.R. Huband) and University of Manitoba historian W.L. Morton. Extracts were to be submitted to the company for approval prior to

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<sup>38</sup> W. Kaye Lamb, "The Federal Archival Scene," *The Canadian Historical Association Reports* (1953), 66-7.

<sup>39</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/93, memorandum from Joan Craig to London Secretary, 6 October 1970.

publication and no extracts from the microfilm could be deposited in other libraries or depositories without permission from the company.<sup>40</sup>

The committee adopted a liberal approach to access to records and the company accepted its recommendations. Access by academic historians to the pre-1870 archival records and the right to publish information from them were routinely granted even though the company still reserved the right to deny them. The company's positive experience with this arrangement overcame the last remaining doubts, dating from the late 1930s, about the wisdom of permitting researchers to publish information from the pre-1870 archives. By 1970 over 190 researchers had received authorization to consult the microfilm in the Public Archives.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Archives Available," *The Beaver* (June 1951): 50.

<sup>41</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/93, Memorandum from Joan Craig to London Secretary, 6 October 1970.

**Chapter 6: Transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company  
Archives to Canada, 1964-1974**

By the mid-1960s the archival dilemma which the Hudson's Bay Company had had since the 1920s was largely resolved. The company enjoyed the public relations value of its history at the same time as it permitted access to and publication of information in its archives to historians. The company's positive experience with its archival programme during the mid-twentieth century laid the groundwork for the resolution of the remaining problems of access to the archives: the limitations of the geographical location of the archives in London (which the microfilm programme had not fully resolved) and the matter of access to the post-1870 records.

There had been interest in transferring the Hudson's Bay Company archives to Canada in 1932. The company had briefly considered handing the archives over to either Oxford University or the Canadian government as a response to fiscal restraints.<sup>1</sup> Nothing was done at the time but that passing reference to a Canadian home for the archives

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<sup>1</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/18, H.B.C. Archives, Reports and Recommendations, 22 September 1932. J.C. Brooks suggested "handing the Archives over to Rhodes House...to the Dominion Government, Ottawa, or the Public Record Office in London" as alternatives to continuing to provide adequate accommodation for the records in company buildings.

was a premonition of what would actually occur forty-two years later. There had been considerable Canadian and American interest over the years in the contents of the archives and access to it. The records became more accessible with the opening of the archives to students in the 1930s and, even more so, after the records began to be microfilmed in 1950. General access to the pre-1870 material was no longer an issue and documents dated after 1870 would "be produced...on such conditions as the Governor and Committee" should determine. Access to the records was also conditional on any information being obtained from the records being "submitted to the Company for approval prior to publication."<sup>2</sup> These access regulations remained the same as long as the archives were in London.

The first attempt to transfer the Hudson's Bay Company archives to Manitoba was made in 1964 with a suggestion from a well-known Winnipeg physician, Dr. William Ewart. He became aware of the immensity and significance of the Hudson's Bay Company archives when he worked in England a few years earlier and had the opportunity to visit Beaver House. He was deeply impressed with the extent of Canadian historical information which was in the archives. When he returned to Winnipeg, he took up the cause.

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<sup>2</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/53, Excerpt of Minute 5313,  
14 December 1937.

In February 1964 Ewart wrote to J.E. Woods, chairman of the Canadian Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, to Maitland B. Steinkopf, the Secretary of the Manitoba Centennial Corporation, and to Dr. H.H. Saunderson, President of the University of Manitoba, to propose that "perhaps the Hudson's Bay Company could be persuaded to turn over some of these private documents for us to preserve for the future."<sup>3</sup> He conceived of the transfer as a project to celebrate the centennials of the Dominion of Canada (1967) and the Province of Manitoba (1970), as well as the tercentenary of the Hudson's Bay Company (1970).

No response from the company to Ewart's initial letter is evident in the archives. The response from the Manitoba Centennial Corporation was not encouraging. It expressed "little hope for a change in the status quo" because the microfilm of the Hudson's Bay Company records for the years down to 1870 was available, albeit through restricted access, in the Public Archives of Canada. The same restrictions would most certainly pertain to any deposits of company archives in Winnipeg. The executive secretary of the Centennial Corporation wrote to Ewart: "It should also be kept in mind that an approach to the Bay asking for copies locally, would mean challenging a known Company

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<sup>3</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.7.1, copy of letter from Ewart to Steinkopf, 13 February 1964.

policy of not multiplying copies of their material...."<sup>4</sup>

This referred to the longstanding rule governing the copying of the records in toto, and limiting publication of even extracts taken from the archives to the discretion of the company.

A year later, Ewart made another approach to the company. He wrote to Ralph Huband, Secretary of the Canadian Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company in Winnipeg, asking him to reconsider the proposal. Ewart emphasised the historical importance of the archives to Manitoba, the West, and Canada, and the contribution of the company to the preservation of Canadian history. In an emotional plea to Duff Roblin, Premier of Manitoba, Ewart asked for the support of the premier's office in persuading "the adventurous traders to part with the precious documents that they have preserved and protected over the centuries in the shadows of London Town"<sup>5</sup> and to provide them on a permanent loan to the people of Canada who, he said, were "now willing and able to accept the responsibility of such an undertaking."<sup>6</sup> In that letter Ewart noted that "the

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<sup>4</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157/1, letter from Joseph Martin, Executive Secretary of the Manitoba Centennial Corporation, to Ewart, 6 August 1964.

<sup>5</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157/2, 8 February, 1965, copy of letter from Ewart to Roblin, 8 February 1965.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

prestige of your office and your reputation of interest in Canadian history would lend weight to this appeal to a private company."<sup>7</sup> Ewart already had received letters of support from the Manitoba Historical Society, the Library Committee of the University of Manitoba, Manitoba historian W.L. Morton, the Chairman of Great West Life Assurance Company, and the Vice-President of the University of Manitoba. At this point in the plan the University of Manitoba library was the most obvious repository for the Hudson's Bay Company archives. Roblin responded with full support for the "suitability of bringing this historic collection of unequalled importance for Western Canada to become a centre of Scholarship in Manitoba."<sup>8</sup> He had also made inquiries "among my Cabinet colleagues and [I] find that this possibility has in fact been raised in a very informal way with the Canadian authorities of the Hudson's Bay Company as a very suitable means of marking the third centenary of the Company in 1970."<sup>9</sup>

Hugh Saunderson, the president of the university, had in fact approached senior officials of the Hudson's Bay Company in Winnipeg with the idea but found that the timing

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157/1, letter from Roblin to Ewart, 16 February 1965.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

was inopportune. There was no need on the part of the company to move the archives to Canada as long as the head office was in London.<sup>10</sup> However, the company must have been feeling some pressure from all this lobbying. The company governor, W.J. Keswick, had been briefed about the archives issue on his trip to Winnipeg in 1964. And David Kilgour, the head of the Canadian Committee, had sent a letter informing the Chairman of the University of Manitoba Library Committee, B.L. Funt, that the company was aware of the interest in a transfer but he did not think that it would be worthwhile to make a formal request for the archives.<sup>11</sup> Informally, Kilgour told Ewart that the Canadian Committee had an interest in acquiring the archives for Manitoba but that "present business deals regarding the actual transfer of the Company operations to Canada might be jeopardized by directing too much attention to the Archives at this same moment..."<sup>12</sup> The idea was put on hold for the next five years.

New developments allowed reconsideration of the matter. In 1969 the Hudson's Bay Company began negotiations with the

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<sup>10</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157/1, letter from Saunderson to Ewart, 22 February 1965.

<sup>11</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181a, copy of letter from Kilgour to Funt, 12 February 1965.

<sup>12</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157/1, copy of letter from Ewart to Roblin, 25 March 1965.

British government to move the company head office to Canada. On 29 May 1970, the day following approval by shareholders, Queen Elizabeth and Governor General Roland Michener issued new charters transferring the head office of the company from the United Kingdom to Canada. Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal were being speculated about as possible locations.<sup>13</sup> Winnipeg which had been the Canadian headquarters of the company since 1860 was chosen as the location for the head office. .

The first Canadian company governor, George T. Richardson, was elected on 28 May 1970, the date of the last board meeting to be held in Britain. Once the head office move had been made the future of the archives was open to speculation and interest in it widened. Viscount Amory, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1969, was reported to have stated that "regardless of whether or not the firm's over-all headquarters move to Canada...he had 'some sympathy' with the idea of moving the company's archives to Canada...This history has much more direct interest to the people of Canada...."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157.2, newspaper clipping in file: "Jottings from the Business World" by Sheldon Bowles, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 March 1969.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

A note on Rolph Huband's file, dated 12 January 1971, summarised the events to that date. The first suggestion to transfer the archives to Canada had come from Dr. Ewart in 1964, with requests for consideration from the University of Manitoba in 1965 and again in 1969. In 1970 the University of Toronto and the Public Archives of Canada expressed interest in the company archives. The Public Archives of Canada had a longstanding relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company archives. It dated from the publication programme undertaken in the 1920s by the Dominion Archivist, Arthur Doughty, to the project to microfilm Hudson's Bay Company archival material which began in 1950. To the historical community the Public Archives of Canada was an obvious location for the company's archives. The Public Archives had moved into a new building in 1967 and, as pointed out in a letter to the company from W.I. Smith, Acting Dominion Archivist, the Public Archives had by 1970 a staff of 300 and a building with "many miles of air-conditioned and temperature-controlled shelves...and the finest research facilities in Canada."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the archives staff was also "accustomed to the enforcement of any restrictions on access which may be imposed by donors."<sup>16</sup> Governor

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<sup>15</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181b, copy of letter from Smith to Amory, 7 May 1970.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Amory inspected the facilities in Ottawa on his trip to Canada in September.

Governor Amory also visited Winnipeg during his 1970 trip. There he met with the new President of the University of Manitoba, Ernest Sirluck, who urged him to consider the university as a possible custodian of the archives. Sirluck was "greatly encouraged by [the Governor's] sympathetic reception to our proposal."<sup>17</sup> Amory assured him that "the future of the archives would be considered within the next few months and that representations from the University would be given very serious consideration."<sup>18</sup> Dr. Sirluck followed up this interview with a four-page letter to the governor setting down "the main points of the argument for the University of Manitoba as the depository of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives."<sup>19</sup> He also emphasised "massive accessibility, massive support, elaborate servicing (including an active publications program), optimal preservation and security arrangements." Accessibility of the archives to researchers would be available through the extended hours of operation of a university library which

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<sup>17</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181c, copy of letter from Sirluck to Amory, 9 October 1970.

<sup>18</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.7.1, copy of note to file by Huband, 12 January 1971.

<sup>19</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181c, copy of letter from Sirluck to Amory, 9 October 1970.

included weekends and evenings. He also noted the expertise available at the university in the areas of teaching and research in a variety of related disciplines and promised to develop the research potential of the archives by orienting "its program of library acquisitions in such a way as to develop the largest potential for the Archives."<sup>20</sup> He quoted an impressive increase in the library's budget which could enable the university to fulfil such a commitment. As to the appropriate servicing of such a collection he proposed to incorporate the time-consuming processing work of arranging and describing the collection to research teams made up of faculty members, graduate, and undergraduate students. Publication of the archives would continue as a result of academic research projects oriented to the archives.

Alice Johnson's successor as company archivist, Joan Craig, who was appointed in 1968, was strongly opposed to the possibility of transferring the archives to the university. In a memo to the London secretary, Reynolds, she thoroughly discussed the considerations necessary to make any changes in the location of the archives. She emphasised that "the opinions expressed are dictated solely by what I consider as of prime importance

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

namely the welfare of the archives."<sup>21</sup> She stressed one of the major responsibilities of the company should be to maintain "their physical safety and their impartiality and authenticity as archives." For this purpose she suggested continued Hudson's Bay Company custody in either London or Winnipeg, or transfer of custody to a national repository in London or in Canada. In a point by point critique of Dr. Sirluck's letter she questioned his comprehension of the contents or extent of the archives and considered his proposals unsubstantive and "at variance with proper archival principles." She also expressed concern that his motives were too parochial, not recognising the broader context of the archives' importance to the contemporary company and to the history of the rest of Canada. If the company decided to transfer the archives to Canada, she said, "...the requirements of satisfactory custody, together with their national importance, lead me unhesitatingly to the conclusion that the only fitting repository is that of the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa."<sup>22</sup>

By August 1970 the Schreyer government in Manitoba again showed an interest in the Hudson's Bay Company archives. Premier Schreyer wrote to the governor of the

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<sup>21</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/154, copy of report from Craig to Reynolds, 18 October 1971.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

company, George Richardson, who was also a Manitoba native, to encourage relocation of the archives to the Provincial Archives building which was then being renovated.<sup>23</sup> At the same time Richardson encouraged Lord Amory to confirm the company's decision to move the archives to Canada and to support the proposal of the University of Manitoba over the Public Archives of Canada.<sup>24</sup> In January 1971 the company was clearly willing to place the archives in Manitoba, but wanted the Manitobans to sort out the matter of the repository. Significantly, the main concern in this regard was optimum accessibility to the archives for research and publication. According to Ralph Huband:

The Company suggests that, before it commences discussions on relocation, a decision as between the University of Manitoba and the Provincial Archives should be made by the Provincial Government in consultation with the University on the basis of physical facilities and maximum use of the material for research and publication. The Company expresses no preference except to say that the approach of Dr. Sirluck was instrumental in activating serious consideration of a move.<sup>25</sup>

By June 1972 the ambitions of the Province of Manitoba came forward when the provincial premier requested immediate discussions with the company about relocation of the

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<sup>23</sup> HBCA/PAM E.157/2, copy of letter from Schreyer to Richardson, 12 August 1970.

<sup>24</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181c, letter from Richardson to Amory, 29 December 1970.

<sup>25</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.7.1, note to file by Huband, 12 January 1971.

archives.<sup>26</sup> Once again Huband set out the current scenario for the Board of Directors of the company. The general consensus of all of "our historical people," including Joan Craig, the company archivist, favoured Ottawa because of its national scope, but the University of Manitoba was hinting at providing a new building for the archives. The Manitoba government was very keen and had modern archival facilities available, but there was concern about their financial commitment. Huband's own recommendation, despite the pressure from the Public Archives, was "to negotiate with the Manitoba Government for a permanent deposit of Hudson's Bay Company Archives material with the Manitoba Archives" under specific conditions.<sup>27</sup> These conditions included the following points: ownership of the archives was to remain with the Hudson's Bay Company; the Province of Manitoba would take custody of the archives in its entirety and maintain it as a separate unit with its own archivist; the province would provide environmentally controlled facilities and access to the public; deposits of microfilm were to continue to be made at the Public Archives and a repository in London; the province would accept regular additional deposits of historical records from the company; unrestricted access would be granted to records over 30

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<sup>26</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181c, note for Directors by Huband, 16 June 1972.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

years of age; and the province would report annually to the company on the status of the archives.

At the end of November 1972 Huband still recommended that the company explore all aspects of the subject with the Manitoba government before arriving at any decision on the matter. The company had definitely made the decision to relocate the archives in Canada but it was still considering both Ottawa and Winnipeg. An important insight into the company's view of the transfer is evident in a discussion paper Huband prepared for the Manitoba government. He said the purpose of the archives after relocation to Canada ought to be twofold: to provide the "widest possible accessibility to scholars" and to provide "maximum encouragement of publication."<sup>28</sup> This approach, when combined with the proposal to allow access to records which were older than 30 years of age, was quite a departure from the longstanding formal policy of restricting access to records created before 1870 and of reserving the right to deny permission to publish information from the archives.

No decision had been made when Ralph Huband met with representatives of the Manitoba government, including the Provincial Archivist, John Bovey, and Assistant Deputy

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<sup>28</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.7.1, position paper prepared by Huband, 29 November 1972.

Minister of Cultural Affairs, Mary Liz Bayer, in June 1972. Manitoba was quite prepared to house the Hudson's Bay Company archives in its newly renovated archives building. The government suggested at that time that "it would be a very welcome gesture if the Company would consider contributing an annual amount to cover all or part of the salary of an archivist who would work exclusively on the Hudson's Bay material."<sup>29</sup> Huband once again recommended that the board should authorise negotiations with the Manitoba government. The board replied that advice on the transfer should be obtained from outside, independent consultants. Thus, a meeting of archival experts and company officials was held in Winnipeg in July 1972. In attendance at the meeting were J.A. Hammond, Executive Vice President of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute; Hartwell Bowsfield, Archivist at York University and former Provincial Archivist of Manitoba; Joan Craig, Hudson's Bay Company Archivist; Shirlee Anne Smith, Hudson's Bay Company Public Relations Officer; Rolph Huband, Secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company; and J.R. Murray, Managing Director of the company. The meeting reached a consensus that the original material in the Hudson's Bay Company archives should be deposited with the Public Archives of Canada and a more extensive microfilm distribution programme should be

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<sup>29</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181c, note for Directors by Huband, 16 June 1972.

developed for other archives. But in December of that year Huband wrote to Joan Craig to inform her that "certain of the Directors expressed strong preference for Winnipeg"<sup>30</sup> and that he was preparing another discussion paper for the Manitoba government.

Negotiations continued and a draft agreement had been prepared by March 1973. In May Huband informed the Public Archives of the decision to place the company archives in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba: "The Board of the Company has agreed with the Manitoba Government to deposit our archives in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba."<sup>31</sup> He explained that

this decision was based on a number of factors. Winnipeg has been the Company's Canadian headquarters since 1860 and the corporate head office since 1970. The Archives and Library Building of the Provincial Government is presently being renovated and will meet the recognized specifications for the management and storage of archives. The present trend towards regional, cultural development encouraged by the Federal Government has also influenced our decision.<sup>32</sup>

The agreement with the Manitoba government allowed the company to retain ownership of the archives and its identity

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<sup>30</sup> HBCA/PAM RG20/2/181c, copy of letter from Huband to Craig, 22 December 1972. George Richardson was most certainly one of the Directors with a preference for Winnipeg and he was, of course, also the governor.

<sup>31</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.3.1, copy of letter from Huband to Smith, 23 May 1973.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

as the company archives, since it would be formally known as the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. The company transferred responsibility for custody of the records and the cost of administration of the archives to the Government of Manitoba. The government agreed to provide an archivist and staff sufficient to continue existing service to the company and the public. The selection of the archivist was to be made in consultation with the company. The archivist would report directly to the provincial archivist. The first archivist, to be known as the Keeper of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Shirlee Anne Smith, was appointed in September 1973. The agreement also stipulated the provision for "the necessary staff and office space to enable the H.B. Archivist to give the same level of service to the public and the same priority to the classification of records as are presently being provided by the company."<sup>33</sup>

The agreement significantly widened public access to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. It stated that there would be no restrictions on publication except for subjects designated by the Hudson's Bay Record Society for its exclusive publication rights. That restriction was eliminated with the demise of the Hudson's Bay Record Society in 1983. The Keeper still referred requests for

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<sup>33</sup> HBCA/PAM RG9/615.3.1, copy of Agreement, 31 July 1973.

permission to publish lengthy excerpts from the records to the company. The current access policy provides "free and open access to the records of the Hudson's Bay Company held in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, while safeguarding rights to privacy (individual and corporate), legal rights, and preservation considerations....All categories of Company records except Land Department records, personnel records and minutes are open to researchers after thirty years....Land Department records are fully accessible, regardless of date of creation. Minutes of the Company and its subsidiaries are accessible after 15 years. Personnel records are available fifty years after the last date on the file...." Access restrictions are as follows:

Requests for access to restricted records must be made to the Keeper or delegate and recommendations are submitted to the Company Secretary [to date, no requests have been denied]... special conditions of access to restricted documents apply to Hudson's Bay Company and Northwest Company employees...special conditions of access to restricted documents apply to Hudson's Bay Company shareholders...[and] special permission can be granted by the Keeper or delegate to consult the originals...if the microfilm copy is illegible.<sup>34</sup>

As a condition of obtaining an export permit from the United Kingdom, the British government required the company to deposit a copy of its archival records from 1670 to 1904 (up to seventy years before the move to Canada) in the Public Record Office, London. As the filming of the

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<sup>34</sup> Access Policy, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, 1993.

archives from 1670-1870 had been completed in 1966, the company was given ten years (to 1984) to microfilm its records from 1870 to 1904. Microfilming, in fact, did not begin until 1980 and it is now estimated to be completed by 1998. Under the agreement the Hudson's Bay Company continues to deposit records of historical importance in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives:

Sufficient records will be retained to enable future historians and other researchers to interpret and reconstruct the Company's commercial history, as well as its role in the social, political and economic development of Canada.<sup>35</sup>

The official public announcement of the agreement was made in Winnipeg on 31 July 1973. The physical transfer of the records to the Provincial Archives of Manitoba was completed in October 1974. The Hudson's Bay Company Archives was reopened to the public in Winnipeg in April 1975. Ownership of the archives was transferred from the company to the Province of Manitoba in March 1994 with a commitment from the company to continue providing funds for their conservation and preservation. The access policy was not changed with the transfer of ownership of the archives to the Province of Manitoba in March 1994.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

### Conclusion

This thesis provides the first comprehensive look at the Hudson's Bay Company archives. The great significance of this archives to the study of Canadian history is obvious. Although these records have been used in a wide range of historical and other research no general history of the company archives itself has been attempted before this one. The main theme in the history of this archives is the dilemma the company's history and archives presented to the company. By the early 1920s the company recognised that its important role in Canadian history gave it an obligation to protect and make available the archival record of that history. The company also knew that its history could be a valuable public relations asset. At the same time the company was worried that allowing outside researchers access to its archives would result in the inappropriate disclosure of business information.

The various company strategies for handling the archival dilemma between 1920 and 1974 have been outlined here. Over those years the company gradually eased control of access to its records, made them more readily accessible on microfilm and, especially after World War II, increasingly allowed researchers to publish information

found in the records. The company's experience with this more liberal approach to archival policy was positive and productive. The company fulfilled its obligation to protect and make available its unique historical record and, in general, continued to obtain the benefit of favourable publicity for having played such a significant part in Canadian history. By the early 1970s, the company was willing to encourage access and publication by permitting the Government of Manitoba to take physical custody of the archives under the most generous terms of access and publication it had ever formally adopted.

This has been the study of one major company's experience with its archives. It is on the whole an archival success story. Few Canadian companies and businesses, however, have archives. Most have not responded successfully to the problem of preservation of and access to their corporate archival records. Public archives no longer have the resources to accept large deposits of business archives. If Canadian business archives are to be preserved, more businesses will have to do so themselves. The Hudson's Bay Company offers an excellent example to follow. It recognised and wrestled with its archival dilemma and it satisfactorily resolved it. Perhaps other companies can do likewise.

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