

Labour Records of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1870.

by PHILIP GOLDRING

One of the chief values of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives¹ for social history lies in several excellent series of employees' accounts, and other records of the selection, deployment, management and behaviour of a mixed European and North American workforce. In the often-neglected and under-documented history of rural and migratory labour, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) offer long runs of systematically organized data which are as complete for the humblest labourer as they are for his most august superior. Data are fullest for 4,300 men on contracts of a year or more, who served in the Company's vast Northern Department between 1824 and 1890; but there is also considerable untapped material on casual or seasonal employment which should be of particular use to students of native and Metis history. These records are approached in this article as labour records because they lack one of the staples of social history — information on marital status. Apart from demographic records of the Red River colony surveyed in this journal by Sprague and Frye (Winter 1979-80), fur trade labour records best describe employees in their relations to the HBC as employer, banker, and general merchant. This is labour history in the broadest senses — not the history of a trade union movement, but the story of the lives and choices of working men, as well as the function of labour and wages as economic factors in the Company's trading system.

The HBCA provide particular opportunities to study working men outside the areas where emphasis has been placed in the past decade. The useful term "labour history" now generally is narrowed to mean union history, while writers who wish to cut a broader swath across the historical experience of labouring men and illuminate some of the "shadowy realism of working class

1 This paper is based on notes for a study of the Hudson's Bay Company's labour system (Northern Department, 1821-1900) which the writer is preparing for the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada. Grateful acknowledgement is due to the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company for permission to consult and to quote from their Archives. Most HBCA references in this paper are to volumes available on microfilm in Ottawa at the Public Archives of Canada (PAC: MG20) and at the Public Record Office, Kew. The microfilmed version includes little beyond 1870, except when volumes contain material both before and after that date. Records for 1871-1900 may also be consulted at the HBCA in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

culture”² show a preference for the term “working class history”. Both approaches add important dimensions to Canadian scholarship, but risk a disproportionate emphasis on the urban and industrial past. While unions, towns and factories are strongly characteristic of more recent, better-documented, and politically topical aspects of Canadian history, it is also refreshing to note, chiefly in works in progress, interest in working people in early basic industries in British North America. Writers such as Johnson and Gaffield on farming, Fingard on shipping, and Nicks and Allaire on the fur trade are drawing attention to opportunities to document working-class experience outside the usual syndical and urban contexts.³

While rural and preindustrial labour are not being ignored, the diffuse and inconsistent nature of most source material puts such studies at a disadvantage. Yet Judith Fingard’s marshalling of data on labour in the shipping industry shows the potential even of conventional sources for the new social history, and largely discounts the pessimistic assumption that “Popular history can be studied only in very limited, regional terms.”⁴ It nonetheless remains broadly true that we can best manage pre-industrial or non-industrial topics by studying groups narrowly limited by time, place, or affiliation with a particular industry or company. Two intractable problems are the placing of Canadian workers in the social context of the whole Atlantic community, and the treatment of men — they were nearly always men — who worked in resource-based industry not as a career, but as a transitory stage towards longer-term objectives.⁵ The trans-Atlantic dimension of much of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s

2 R. Hann and G. Kealey, “Documenting Working Class History: North American Traditions and New Approaches”, *Archivaria* 4 (Summer 1977): 99.

3 The emphasis on urban and union history is evident in “The Working Class Record”, Supplement to *Archivaria* 4 (Summer 1977): 71-183, and also in G. Kealey and P. Warrian, eds., *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto, 1977). The growing emphasis on non-urban and pre-industrial topics was evident in several excellent papers presented at a McGill University conference, “Class and Culture: Dimensions of Canada’s Labour Past” (7-8 March 1980), including those of Judith Fingard, Chad Gaffield and Leo Johnson. See also Gratien Allaire, “Les engagements pour la traite des fourrures; évaluation de la documentation”, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 4, no. 1 (juin 1980): 3-26; and John Nicks, “Orkney men in the HBC 1780-1821” in Third North American Fur Trade Conference, *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, C.M. Judd and A.J. Ray, eds. (Toronto, 1980): 102-26. The same volume includes C.M. Judd’s ““Mixed Band of Many Nations’: 1821-70” (127-46), a survey of Company hiring policies that adds useful detail to what may be found in the standard published sources, which are Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien. Son Rôle dans l’Histoire des Provinces de l’Ouest* (Paris, Institut d’Ethnologie, 1945): 968-75, 1002-9; also Edwin E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson’s Bay Company 1670-1870; Volume II: 1763-1870* (London, Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1959), especially 408-9, 482-5; and John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson’s Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957): 21-3, 323, 434-5. For an example of some uses of nineteenth-century social data from the HBCA, see Philip Goldring, “Lewis and the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Nineteenth Century”, *Scottish Studies* 24 (1980), in press.

4 Quoted in Hann and Kealey, “Working Class Record”: 99, attributed to Richard Cobb. Newspapers and travel literature provided most of the material for J. Fingard’s “The Winter’s Tale: The Seasonal Contours of Pre-industrial Poverty in British North America, 1815-1860”, Canadian Historical Association *Historical Papers* (1974): 65-94.

5 For migrant labour it would be difficult even after sixty years, to cite a better source than Edmund Bradwin’s *The Bunkhouse Man*, intr. Jean Burnet (Toronto, 1972). Bradwin’s railroad construction labourers were in almost all respects materially worse off than the HBC servants of a generation or two earlier.

hiring gives the HBCA a distinctive value. The records' potential, especially when matched with Scottish demographic records, is evident in John Nicks' highly original work on HBC servants from the Scottish parish of Orphir before 1821. Because much of the Company's permanent (or year-round) workforce came from overseas or Lower Canada, the HBCA provide ample documentation on the problems of recruiting such men. Accounts detail servants' earnings and spending, and journals and correspondence are full of comments on work discipline. The enormous mass of the HBCA, taken along with scattered smaller collections of fur trade officers' papers, constitute an exceptional resource for the study of migratory labour in pre-industrial contexts in British North America.

WHO WERE THE SERVANTS OF THE HBC?

Stockholders elected the HBC's London-based governor, deputy governor, and committee; their principal representatives in North America were the overseas governors (or after 1870, chief commissioners), of whom the most famous was George Simpson, governor of all the Company's North American operations from 1826 to 1860. In the fur-trade territory all the HBC's men were employees, but this need hardly suggest an egalitarian structure. The terms "Factors and Servants" appear in the Charter of 1670 and continued in use down to the twentieth century. Their survival denoted the continuance of a hierarchical structure in which incomes and prescribed privileges, not ownership of the means of production, maintained social ranking between gentlemen (or "officers") and servants or "men". This ranking was particularly clear between 1821 and 1871, when a few dozen commissioned gentlemen, the Chief Factors and Chief Traders, had a collective agreement with the London committee which allowed them job security, the right to be consulted on management of the trade, and a share of the profits, supplemented by a guaranteed minimum when profits slid in the 1860s. These commissioned gentlemen asserted a right to be considered as partners. They were sometimes conceded minor perquisites as such, including the right to buy trade goods at cost price, but they had no property rights in the capital stock or equipment of the fur trade, only a slice of the profits. But privilege, pay and tradition set them well above the salaried clerks who were the next rank down, and from whom commissioned gentlemen were inevitably chosen. Surgeons, the masters of decked vessels, and outpost masters ("Postmasters") were also officers. In 1830 the Northern Department had 56 officers (salaried as well as commissioned) and 403 servants, or one officer to every seven servants. By 1870 these numbers had risen to 140 and 585, or one officer to every four servants.⁶

The Northern Department, with which this survey is principally concerned, was always the largest in extent and usually in manpower. Its rival before 1850 was the Western or Columbia Department, comprising lands west of the Rocky Mountains. The Southern Department occupied the Great Lakes and James Bay drainage, while Montreal controlled from the Upper Ottawa to Labrador. The Northern Department therefore comprised part of north-

6 These figures are drawn from HBCA: B.239/g and B.235/g; the analysis of these sources is explained in the writer's *Historical Statistics of the Hudson's Bay Company Workforce, 1821-1890* National Historic Parks and Sites Branch Manuscript Report, in press.

western Ontario, the three modern prairie provinces and the two northern territories. J.S. Galbraith counted 1,565 officers and permanent servants in North America in 1845, of whom 448 were in the Northern Department.⁷

The origins and skills of servants varied considerably over time. Generally just above half the workforce below clerk's rank consisted of labourers or common boatmen (middlemen) earning the minimum annual wage of £15 - £17 from 1821 to 1858 and £22 thereafter until greater flexibility was introduced in the 'seventies. This high proportion of labourers had fallen to one-third by 1880, when main transport routes had been mechanized. Skilled boatmen made up another 14% to 17% and craftsmen ("mechanics") continued around 10% through the century. The remainder of the positions were held by the lower grades of traders, including interpreters (conspicuous as 12.3% of the permanent salaried workforce in 1880) and miscellaneous specialists such as fishermen. If we disregard casual employees engaged for less than a year at a time, the number of servants fell below the number of officers in the Department about 1890, when almost a generation of absolute decline had brought servants' numbers down to 126.

The popular image of the HBC servant as an Orkney boatman belongs to the period before 1821. The reorganized HBC took over the unexpired contracts of several hundred Nor'west engagés and then set about reducing the numbers previously kept by both companies for competition and defence. In the winnowing process French Canadians proved more persistent than Scots, and in 1830 more than 42% of the permanent servants were originally from Lower Canada. Canadian and Scottish Métis already made up more than a quarter, and Scots, nine-tenths of them Orkneymen, made up 116 or 30% of the year-round establishment. Static wage scales compelled the HBC to recruit more heavily in Scotland and to replace retiring French Canadians with more Métis; by 1840 Canadian participation had fallen by half to 21%, Métis had risen to 35%, and Scots were the largest single group, just under 40%. Only 62% of those were from Orkney. Thereafter the Métis ("natives" to the Company) were the largest of the three groups, peaking around 60% about 1860. Scottish participation never rose much above 40% thereafter, while the Métis remained consistently above half. The 139 Scots in 1875 were about 44% from the island of Lewis, 32% from Orkney, with most of the remainder from Zetland. Scots on average had shorter careers and longer processes of adaptation to the country than Métis; hence among year-round servants the native element was over-represented among traders and interpreters, and in the better-paid jobs in the inland boat brigades. Since all these employees were paid by credits in the Company's ledgers, keeping track of them became as big a chore for the Company's quill-drivers as charting the flows of trade goods and furs. There were usually 13 or 14 separate administrative districts and each kept records at its head post for all its servants; and key items from these accounts were registered at the departmental depot as well. Even casual servants may be traced individually if they had dealings with the HBC outside their home districts.

7 Northern Department figure is from HBCA: B.239/g/25; Galbraith's calculation is given in *Imperial Factor*; 434n.

The labour records which evolved in the early 1820s and were kept in remarkably standard form from then to 1870 (in some cases longer) can therefore support many sorts of research, from the minute focus of the genealogist to the most elaborate prosopography. They may be broken down arbitrarily into four types: first, correspondence about recruiting; second, contracts and abstracts of engagements; third, district and departmental records, which kept track of servants' earnings and spendings; and finally, correspondence files and private papers which disclose local comment on employees' duties, abilities and behaviour, collectively and very often in individual detail. The HBC was an exemplary instance of a nineteenth century bureaucracy, showing rigid adherence to forms and scrupulous attention to detail.

The variety and extent of these records makes a simple description impossible. To suggest the richness of the documentation (without simply reciting the calendar of the HBC Archives)⁸ this article follows the logical stages of a European servant's career in the Northern Department, with sideways glances towards parallel records for servants hired or deployed elsewhere. Along the way a good deal is said about the Company and its men, but the focus is on the records themselves. A Scottish career is traced rather than a Métis one because of the greater interest these imported labourers have attracted, and because overseas recruitment adds several extra dimensions to the survey of documentary sources.

TRACING A EUROPEAN SERVANT'S CAREER — LONDON RECORDS

The London office tried to maintain up-to-date records of the whereabouts and financial standing of all servants. This was a statutory obligation after 1821, and was also a resource to satisfy inquiries from servants' relatives and retired employees, particularly in the north of Scotland. The HBCA divides the pre-1870 London records into 67 groups, of which fewer than a dozen are really useful for labour studies. A letter in the A.10 series, London Inward Correspondence, General, provides a sample of the degree to which detail may be found. Late in 1857 a woman in Zetland wrote to the Secretary, inquiring about money her husband had planned to send from Lesser Slave Lake. She owed the money to a Lerwick merchant, from whom she had been receiving "Some Supplies. . . for my Family and had it not been for Mr. Williamson's humanity Since my Husband left here I and my Children could not have been alive."⁹ This letter is hardly a random basis for selecting a case to study, but the search for Edward Anderson's missing remittance, and a discussion of his recorded career choices and financial transactions, provided an interesting framework for describing parts of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

The first step was to find when Edward Anderson joined the Company. Servants' European contracts were generally signed in triplicate, with copies for the employee, for London, and for the appropriate "factory" or depot in

8 Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Manuscript Division, *General Inventory Manuscripts Vol. 3: MG17-MG21* (Ottawa, 1974) pp. 167-300; separate calendars exist at HBCA in Winnipeg for the whole period to 1900.

9 HBCA: A.10/42 fo. 557, Christina Anderson to Secretary, 22 Dec. 1857.

North America. A.32, Servants' Contracts, confirms that Anderson engaged two months before shiptime in 1848 and went to York Factory. (A.32/20 fo. 245.) London copies of the abstracts of servants' accounts would have confirmed that Anderson continued in service down to the time of his wife's enquiry. These and other accounts confirm "his regularity in sending me small sums annually." Since these records are all (except A.32) duplicates of York Factory groups, they can be discussed later. London had sources of its own to keep track of Anderson's career. The first was the servants' ledger, now A.16/46 (1837-62, fo. 34). This reveals that Anderson opened a London account in 1856, when the balance of his Northern Department "fur trade" account was transferred to the Company to earn interest. Subsequent fur trade balances were transferred until he retired in autumn, 1858, when his London account held £55.17.3 of which £4.4.2 was accrued interest. He withdrew the whole sum through the Lerwick agent and the Union Bank of Scotland in October, 1858.

Other London sources, less comprehensively organized, shed light on many careers though not necessarily on Anderson's. A most voluminous but rewarding series is the general correspondence, A.5 (outward) and A.10 (inward), from which Christina Anderson's letter has already been cited. The London Secretary's bound letter-books, A.5, are arranged chronologically. The names of Scottish hiring agents can readily be picked out in the nominal index at the front of each volume.¹⁰ Since private inquiries and HBC replies were often routed through the agents, this series offers easy access to at least a sample of letters written by, for or about ordinary servants. The Anderson enquiry began with a letter from Zetland agent John Cowie, enclosing a fragment of a letter from Anderson himself. (A.10/42 fos. 492-3.) Although A.10 is organized chronologically, unbound and without index, the replies to Cowie and Christina Anderson (A.5/21 fos. 184, 195) acknowledge the original letters by date, and to narrow the search it is possible to work backwards from A.5 and find the Zetland letters in A.10. Perhaps 80% of A.5 and 90% of A.10 are unrelated to labour, so a search from the nominal index of A.5 seems an acceptable research strategy for dealing with both series — 93 reels of microfilm to 1870. A.10 has two noteworthy features: much of the material before 1840 is missing, and loose papers and stray enclosures are grouped at the beginning of each year. Such loose documents are not negligible: they include, for instance, depositions from four returned servants who were stirring up resentment against the Company in Lewis late in 1856.¹¹ But even the agency correspondence alone is extremely valuable for a survey of the Company's hiring business and the economic and social circumstances of the hiring ports; it may therefore be useful to Scottish historians or to those studying emigration from the Northern and Western Isles to Canada. Both A.5 and A.10 continue beyond 1870 in the HBCA in Winnipeg.

Other more specialized records bear on the careers of individual employees, especially of the higher ranks. A.36, Servants' Wills, reflects the prevailing

10 The agencies were extremely stable and often passed from father to son. John Cowie and his son Robert held the Lerwick agency 1842-74; Edward Clouston of Stromness was agent from 1834 to 1867; and the Stornoway firm of W. & R. Morison held the agency from 1831 to 1866.

11 HBCA: A.10/41 fos. 2-12, Lewis depositions, November-December 1856.

custom of men in the fur-trade territories naming the Company's Secretary as executor of their wills. The A.36 files include some of the correspondence generated by wills, especially when annuities were to be paid to survivors. Wills in A.36 have already been useful for studies in the social history of fur trade families, and will doubtless prove a major source for whoever undertakes a long-overdue collective biography of the Company's managers. But like A.31 (registers of officer's commissions) and A.34 (Characters and Staff Servants' Records) the wills are proportionately less useful for the study of lower grades of employees. There is, unfortunately, no systematic collection of passenger lists for the Company's ships, though the log of the *Prince Rupert* for 1848 confirms that Edward Anderson from Zetland was among the between-decks passengers for York Factory. (C.1/955 fo. 2.) Even better than ships' logs are the lists of servants in A.67/7, especially the lists sent to London by John Cowie in the late 1850s and early 'sixties. Some of these lists are specific even on recruits' ages; but fewer than a third of the possible lists are present, and the rest are either lost or scattered in miscellaneous financial records, as they were originally part of the agents' claims for commissions and expenses.

Three series of official correspondence are also valuable sources for the study of labour in the Company's trading system. Outward Correspondence, HBC Official, (A.6) includes the instructions of the governor and committee in London to overseas governors or chief commissioners. Although much of this material is duplicated elsewhere, this is a prime source for investigating the "official mind" of the Company and for approaching matters of a distinctly trans-Atlantic character. In 1857, for instance, Scottish newspapers picked up mendacious reports from the *Toronto Globe* about the Company's treatment of an indebted labourer who deserted. The HBC's efforts to set the record straight may be traced through A.6 and its matching series, A.12, in which Governor Simpson's replies are filed.¹² The search for adequate men in Europe and the calibre of North American recruits were matters of urgent interest to both the London managers and the fur trade officers, occasioning regular comment. This was especially true in the 1850s, when London's parsimony caused unnecessary strain on attempts to sustain morale in a Northern Department being overrun by competition. Official London inward letters also included some from the masters of bayside "factories". The York correspondence in A.11/118-119a is a rich source for conditions at that post in the nineteenth century, on servants coming and going by the English ships, and on the general concerns of inland officers about the quality of the men they were receiving.

DOCUMENTING A SERVANT'S CAREER IN NORTH AMERICA.

Once Edward Anderson disembarked and was accepted for the service by York Factory officers, the process of documenting his North American career began. The Zetland agent had already advanced him £8.10.0 to clear his local obligations and outfit himself for the Bay; he spent a further £3.2.7 at the York

¹² HBCA: A.5/21 pp. 133, 138, Secretary to Clouston, 12, 20 Oct. 1857; A.6/32 fo. 199, Secretary to Simpson, 11 Sept. 1857; A.6/33 fo. 10, same to same 16 Oct. 1857; A.10/42 fo. 320, Clouston to Secretary 6 Oct. 1857, all deal with the *Globe's* allegations about Benjamin Coutts.

Shops; these sums were duly noted in small account books or bits of correspondence, and were drawn together as the first charges against his wages when his ledger account was drawn up in May 1849, the end of the current fiscal year.¹³ In the meantime, for convenient reference, vital information from his contract was entered in the first of three huge bound registers in which Company clerks from 1825 to 1894 were supposed to register every contract signed in or for the Northern Department. (B.239/u/1-3).

These contract registers had no counterparts outside the Northern Department. More than 10,000 entries concerning salaried employees were registered, including contracts of men subsequently transferred to other departments, and the first contracts of apprentice clerks. The registers are arranged chronologically by the first letter of the surname—all the “A’s” in order of enlistment, and so on. Since contracts for more than one year were general, there were no tidy terminal dates, but no new men were entered in the first volume after 1851, or in the second after 1867. Each new name was numbered; space was left for up to seven contracts at each number, with a cross-reference to the new number in cases of an eighth or subsequent contract. While internal cross-references were clear, links from one register to the next (sometimes through all three) are much less reliable. Computer-sorted transcripts of these records produced a large number of probable pairs, and logical or documentary tests have established that about 10% of the 4,750 “individuals” are actually duplicate entries of men listed elsewhere. A small additional number of links looks probable, but these are unproven.

Edward Anderson’s first contract, signed at Lerwick, was registered at York Factory as No. 47 of the first register. His Scottish parish of origin, Lunnasting according to his contract, was recorded (in garbled form as Lummstray) along with his place and date of engagement, though not his age. He was entered as a labourer engaged for five years, and the expiry date, which was never entered in a contract, was extrapolated as June 1853. Wages were £17 a year. Had there been another Edward Anderson in the service at the time, all the accounts in the department would have been adjusted to call the earlier man ‘(a)’ and the later one ‘(b)’. Some names were very common; two men newly arrived from Barvas, Lewis in 1875 were registered as Donald McLeod ‘(m)’ and ‘(n)’. When Edward Anderson re-engaged in 1853 as a middleman for £20 a year, his new contract was listed as No. 5 of the second Engagement Register. His expired contract was, anomalously, entered above the second one. Such duplication often occurred in the early ’fifties, and greatly aided logical testing of links between registers. Anderson’s 1853 contract was for two years, and was followed by the entry “Europe 1858.” This marks an important oddity of the Engagement Registers: the problem of verbal and implicit contracts.

Because of uncertain navigation in Hudson Bay, contracts were generally open-ended, with no expiry date expressed in the contract itself. Engagements were to extend for a fixed term of years, at the end of which time the servant

13 Although many Department-wide labour records were kept in separate series (or classified as such by the HBCA in London) such as B.239/g, /l, /q, /u and /x, the factory’s own B.239/d series, almost 1,500 volumes to 1870, contains much that is relevant to new recruits, seasonal tripmen, or servants who did not belong to the York Factory district.

could sign a new engagement, continue under the old one from year to year if the Company consented, or retire after giving a year's notice. The flexibility was built in to guarantee the man wages if no ship was on hand to take him home; the year's notice was required to let the Company make timely plans to replace departing servants. In fact many servants gave notice who did not subsequently retire,¹⁴ and so kept their options open from year to year. As long as neither wages nor duties changed, there was no need for a new contract. This, far more than temporary retirements, explains why there are often gaps in a servant's record between expiry of one contract and signing of the next, or between the expiry of the last and the recorded date of retirement. The gaps are therefore ambiguous, sometimes representing temporary retirement, other times marking a period of one or more years of verbal re-engagement. Care must be taken in handling these gaps in the engagement registers. Along with the many valuable features of the B.239/u series, its reliability and usefulness can be enhanced by reference to other sources in the HBCA.

The district statements and abstracts of servants' accounts (B.239/l and B.239/g respectively) are two York Factory series designed to list, year by year, all employees currently receiving annual wages. In theory, the Northern Department hired all permanent servants and billed the appropriate district for their services, recording the transaction in B.239/l. Anderson's first year's wages were charged half to Saskatchewan, where he wintered and was trained, and half to the general charges of the department, because he was inexperienced and not available until late summer. The 'l' series offers little useful information on the men themselves, and shows no vertical linkage to demonstrate, for example, that Edward Anderson earning £17 yearly in Saskatchewan in 1852 is the same man as Edward Anderson earning £20 in the same district a year later. The district statements are therefore principally useful for the quick tallies they provide of servants in each district, and occasionally for tracing in terse marginal notes the sum and reason for bonus pay arrangements, known as "gratuities." Jobs, origins and other data must be sought elsewhere.

For most purposes the best single tabular source of data on the workforce, man by man and year by year, is the voluminous collection of Abstracts of Servants' Accounts (B.239/g, 1821 to 1873, and B.235/g, 1873-1892) With some lacunae towards the beginning and end of the series, it presents a great deal of information drawn by vertical and horizontal linkage from a rich assortment of contemporary data. The tabular format did not change over almost 70 years. These registers were sent to London to meet a statutory obligation to give the Colonial Office annual lists of all employees;¹⁵ and since the abstracts allowed all aspects of servants' fur trade accounts to be recapitulated in a single volume, the London copies must have been the first recourse for clerks seeking answers to inquiries like that of Christina Anderson in 1857. The abstracts derived a good deal of biographical data from the engagement registers,

14 See for example HBCA: B.239/f/25a, Notices of Retirement 1837-42, fos. 1-2: 18 men gave notice for 1838, of whom nine re-engaged; 16 for 1839, of whom at least ten re-engaged.

15 Great Britain, Acts, 1 & 2 Geo. IV cap. lxvi, sec. iii; the lists at least as far as 1838-9, may be found in CO 42, e.g. Public Record Office, CO 42/289 fos. 102-121 lists 1103 officers and servants of outfit 1837. These reports are very similar to the lists in the various "g" series of post records, but the lists in CO 42 omit names of men who died in mid-outfit.

a great deal more from the Servants' Ledgers or annual balance-sheets, and miscellaneous information from other sources.¹⁶

A typical volume of abstracts began with commissioned officers' accounts, a separate section for clerks and postmasters of the Northern Department, another for wintering servants, one for clerks *and* servants of the Mackenzie River district (collected separately because they came to hand so late) and similar divisions for the Columbia accounts, though these were removed in 1853 and kept in a parallel series at Fort Victoria (B.226/g). Following the Columbia accounts were miscellaneous records of retired servants or private individuals who had accounts at fur trade posts. (These are not to be confused with fur trappers' accounts, which were kept in a country standard called "Made Beaver".) Some earlier volumes had separate listings for the previous year's retired servants, sorted according to their destinations — Europe, Canada, Red River, and so on. These were later all lumped together with other freemen (retired servants and others living in the Company's territory) but in either case the closing sections of the abstracts usually noted the servant's whereabouts immediately after he retired.

A description of the abstracts, column by column, gives an accurate summary of how Edward Anderson spent his money and the manner in which one may find this recorded. Each line bearing his name began with a space (occasionally blank) to indicate which page of the current Servants' Ledger contained his detailed account (B.239/x.) Then followed a number simply denoting his position on the abstract page, and a space for his name. Anderson's parish of origin came next — not Lunnasting as in the contract (A.32), but the garbled version found in the Engagement Register. (Such mangling of names was unusual; so were blanks.) After parish came capacity or job title, which changed from Labourer, a European term, to Middleman (a fur trade word, meaning the oarsman in the middle of the boat) in 1853. Then came district—general charges in 1848, Saskatchewan in 1849-57. His length of previous service, updated from year to year, appeared in the next column, and the ninth field reported the probable expiry date of his current contract, unless he was working under one already expired. This was the last column of basic biographical data. The remainder of the abstract (apart from a rarely-used "Remarks" column at the end) was numeric account data. The column reporting previous service was extensively used during testing, already referred to, of matched pairs (suspected links) within the Engagement Registers. Often an apparently "new" servant proved to have several years' previous service according to the abstracts; and if the service matched that recorded elsewhere in the

16 A comparison of B.239/u with B.239/g helps establish the accuracy of the engagement register. The abstracts of accounts for a year chosen at random showed 425 servants earning wages from 1 June 1847 to 31 May 1848. Only 17 of these could not be traced through alphabetically-sorted listings of the engagement register (4% missing) and a further 19 were traceable, but first appeared in the register at some point after 1847-48. (4.5% late entries.) All but five of the 36 were either natives or of unknown origin, and at least one of the Scots represented had been in the country since before 1821. Since Europeans' contracts were registered as they disembarked at York Factory, it is not surprising that B.239/u appears slightly less reliable for native than for European employees. The registers have particular value in distinguishing between Red River and other "natives", a distinction hardly ever made by the abstracts.

Engagement Register for an “earlier” servant of the same name and origin, the link was accepted. On detailed examination the field for previous service generally proved accurate when compared to the Registers or to earlier volumes of abstracts, but two cautionary remarks should be made. First, the field was often left blank for Métis servants with long but interrupted careers; and European servants were often treated as new men if they returned to Europe between engagements. For example, in linkage testing for B.239/u, Edward Anderson of Lunnasting, 1848, was matched with Edward Anderson of Shetland, 1864. There were no overlapping contracts and no cross-references in the registers, so the 1864 abstracts were checked, reporting the Edward Anderson of that year as a new servant without previous HBC employment, and permitting the matched pair to be discarded.

The lapse of 18 years and the rarity of second migrations made this an unsurprising result, but it was wrong. During research for this article the focus on Edward Anderson prompted a reopening of the question through a much more time-consuming test, a search of recruitment correspondence for 1864. This disclosed the London Secretary’s permission to *re-engage* Anderson, and also a letter from the man himself, mentioning his nine years at “Slave Lake” and declaring “I am 47 years old but in perfect health, and consider myself as fit for the Service as when I last left it.”¹⁷ Although the previous service field recorded in the abstracts generally stands up to close scrutiny, and missing values averaged under 18% in seven sample years before 1875, the net effect of error in this field is to make the workforce appear a little less experienced than it actually was.

The proximate source of financial detail in the abstracts was the series of Servants’ Ledgers, B.239/x, running from 1821 to 1876 in nine microfilmed volumes, and beyond 1876 in the originals. The sequence of these volumes is very loosely alphabetical, so the indexes are indispensable; these exist in separate bound volumes in B.239/x and frequently in cross-references from other York account books. The compressed data in ledger accounts is similar to the annual statement sent to district headquarters to inform servants of their financial standing each summer.¹⁸ The ledgers are not suited to systematic large-scale surveys of the workforce, for the data are derived from other more detailed surviving York Factory account books, and most were also transcribed into the abstracts of accounts. This transferred data may be found in the eighteen columns of the abstracts which come after the nine columns of biographical data. Some columns were mutually exclusive—in 10-11 debit or credit balances at the close of the past fiscal year were recorded, while 27-28 report

17 HBCA: A.10/57 fos. 418-19, Cowie to Secretary, 7 March 1864, encl. Anderson to Cowie, 5 Mar. 1864; A.5/28 pp. 141-2, 146, Secretary to Cowie, 17, 19 March 1864.

18 HBCA: A.11/118 fo. 375 makes it clear that until 1859 copies of the abstracts were sent to districts, and thereafter ledger accounts (unitemized) were sent to men. Clare to Secretary, 17 Sept. 1859. This was a matter of some complaint among the men; one Peter Linklater ‘(a)’ wrote from retirement in Orkney complaining of the “blind work” of paying for goods when “I never got any particular account of the goods I received. . . nor of the prices”; HBCA: A.10/42 fo. 536, Linklater to Secretary 15 Nov. 1857. Fourteen Edmonton servants made a written request for “a Full Itemed Account” and “The Privelege of Having a Pass Book Between [each man] and The Companys Shop” in 1872; Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Hardisty MSS (H264C file 39 item 185), Sinclair et al to Hardisty, 2 April 1872.

the closing balances of the current fiscal year. Nos. 21-22, "Profit and Loss", showed retired men's unclaimed balances or uncollectable debts when these were finally expunged from the accounts. (Edward Anderson was overpaid 2d. by mistake when he retired in 1858; this was carried forward as a freeman's debt until written off to profit and loss in 1861. See B.239/g/40 fo. 39.) The twelfth column reported wages and the thirteenth reported gratuities and sundry credits at the district. The fourteenth and fifteenth columns, very rarely employed, were debit and credit columns for rectifying errors in previous years' accounts, errors which seem chiefly to have arisen, despite the precaution of identifying letter-codes, in petty out-of-district expenses incurred by servants with common names.

Two following columns recorded advances in England and Canada. It was only in the first and last years of Anderson's careers that he had advances charged to his account. They consisted of half a year's pay advanced at Lerwick in years when he was engaged, and small sums representing his balances on retirement, paid when he reached London. These "advance" columns were almost entirely limited to payments outside Rupert's Land to new or retired servants; other overseas transactions were usually covered under a later heading, "Bills on London" (or Montreal.) But after 1874 (B.235/g/2) there was a surge of advances in Canada, particularly against the accounts of clerks and postmasters. This suggests that employees' spending habits shifted towards greater spending in Canada rather than in the HBC salesshops. Nonetheless, the bulk of servants' buying continued to be in the form of Book Debts, or advances of goods and credits in the Northern Department.¹⁹

These Book Debts are the 19th column in the abstracts, and the field is almost never empty. Usually only one figure appeared in the column, but it was the total of several sums in the Servants' Ledgers, which in turn were copied from the Book Debts Ledgers, B.239/q. In that series servants' names were entered in rows, and district names were printed as column headings. Tracing Anderson's 1854 account from left to right across B.239/q/17 fo. 6) we find him being charged £2 for goods in Saskatchewan, 6s. at Norway House, £10.4.6 at York Factory, and nothing anywhere else. These three entries and the total, £12.16.6, were transferred to the Servants' Ledger (B.239/x/6a p. 126); the total was copied from there to the abstracts. (B.239/g/34 fo. 9). But among the most interesting sources in the HBCA are the raw material from which the "q" ledgers were compiled, for they reveal, with quantities and unit cost, the actual items that made up the £12 worth of goods.

A note should be interjected here on the system of mark-ups for sales to servants.²⁰ The fur trade computed a general mark-up of 33¹/₃% on London

19 Column 18 appears to have been virtually useless; its title suggests it was designed to record money received outside the Department on behalf of men serving in it.

20 For the standing rules and regulations of the Northern Department, see the following sources: the Champlain Society volume, *Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31* ed. R.H. Fleming (Toronto, 1940): 218-31 for 1828; E.H. Oliver, *The Canadian North-West Its Early Development and Legislative Records*. Publications of the Canadian Archives No. 9, (Ottawa, 1915) vol. 2: 743-57 (1836) and HBCA: B.239/k/2 fos. 248-58; a MS copy of these last, 1843 regulations is also available in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC): Add MSS 220, with amendments, additions and deletions complete to 1874. With respect to servants' tariffs (i.e. mark-ups on goods from the Company salesshops) the advantages established in the 1820s were left substantially in place even by the general revisions of the standing rules in 1887, for which see HBCA: D.38/9, "Minutes of Council, Winnipeg, 30 Aug. 1887".

prime cost on all goods imported by sea to York Factory. This was the "York Factory Inventory Cost", roughly equal to cost landed. Employees, whether they visited the Bay in summer or not, were encouraged to shop there by lower prices and free inland freight allowances. Goods charged to accounts directly at the York saleshop cost commissioned officers only the York Inventory price (prime cost plus a third) and servants and clerks paid fifty percent above London price (prime cost plus half.) Thus, an article bought for £1 in London was valued at £1.6.5 at York Inventory Price, and at that price could be sold to commissioned officers or transferred to inland districts for sale or trade. The same item could be bought by a servant from the York shops in summer for £1.10.0, or from the trade room in winter, anywhere inland, for £2. Since the one-third mark-up was reckoned on balance to be a little better than cost landed, the masters of York considered the saleshop important in cutting losses at the costly depot. On the other hand just 350 miles away at Norway House, Chief Factor Sinclair complained in 1861 that sales to servants on the inland tariff were a losing venture, failing to cover the freight cost of 15s. per 90-pound piece, especially on cheap, bulky popular goods like tea, sugar and tobacco.²¹ Rates designed to cover cost and handling were applied to servants' purchases of "country produce", and furs were sold to employees at a mark-up on London prices, to prevent their retention inland.

Against this background we can examine Edward Anderson's purchases in detail for the outfit year 1854-55. His Saskatchewan book debts, traced through Fort Edmonton's servants' accounts for 1854, consisted of nothing but country produce: a portage strap, 20 pounds of grease, eight pounds of butter, and two large moose skins. (B.60/d/111 fo. 13.) The district account book divided purchases into two columns, one for country produce valued at the inland tariff, and one for imported goods, valued initially at York Inventory prices. Before the sub-totals were combined the 50% servants' markup was applied to the York price for imported goods. In Anderson's case in 1854 the account listed only country produce, to a meagre total of £2, the figure which was carried forward to the B.239/q/17 Book Debt ledger for 1854. Anderson's Norway House book debt was just 6s. for one-third of a bag of Red River flour, purchased on 7 August. (B.154/d/155 fo. 13). The "d" in these references identifies the volume as an account book; the preceding number identifies the post—e.g. B.60 is Fort Edmonton Post Records. Districts kept track of goods issued not only to their own servants, but also to those of other districts, so that appropriate credits and transfers could be arranged in the general accounts at the end of every year.

Thus a post like Norway House, hub of the transport system of the Northern Department, had voluminous accounts for servants other than its own. Yet really big purchases were made at York, where prudent servants took advantage of lower prices at the Bay. Anderson's book debts at York in 1854 are principally for small items. (B.239/d/864 fos. 107-8.) Expenditures over £1 included £1.12.0 transferred to the credit of a retiring Saskatchewan colleague George Sinclair (b), and 40 pounds of crash sugar, the latter reflecting the fact

21 PAC: MG 19 D 7 vol. 2 pp. 95-6, Norway House Letterbooks; Sinclair to Mactavish, 26 December 1861.

that up to the late 'fifties tea and sugar were "luxuries. . . which, though used by the labouring classes in modern times, were not thought necessary at the period when the scale of rations were originally arranged."²² Other items over 10s. were seven pounds of congou tea, one blanket capote, eight yards of fine tartan, and a plain 3¹/₂-point blanket. Other recorded purchases included a "Guernsey frock", a tartan shawl, and four black hair ribbons.

Why did Edward Anderson buy women's clothing? His wife and children were in Zetland, so at first glance the Guernsey frock and hair ribbons could be taken as evidence either of strikingly eccentric personal habits, or of somewhat irregular family circumstances at Lesser Slave Lake. The latter is possible, but Anderson's parsimonious life inland, and the rather small and select choice of women's articles bought at York, suggest another answer. Most servants' clothes were bought as yard goods or made up from leather—hence the two moose skins bought in Saskatchewan. Anderson's sewing was perhaps done by the wife or daughter of another Lesser Slave Lake servant, or by one of the widows who tended to attach themselves to trading posts. Anderson's purchases at York, made at the most favourable tariff, may have recompensed someone for such domestic services. It is also possible that the frock and hair ribbons were gifts for children, or for some more casual acquaintance made at the Factory.

This brings us back to Christina Anderson, waiting in Lerwick for her annual remittance. This appeared in the next important column of the abstracts, "Bills on London".²³ Distinct from advances, these were in effect cheques written on the servant's wage account, countersigned by the appropriate officer to guarantee the account could cover the bill, and forwarded to be cashed in Britain (or, by an adjacent column of the accounts, at Montreal.) The abstracts for 1849-56 show that over eight years Anderson sent an unnamed person between £4 and £6 annually, to a total of £36 over seven years. From 1865 to 1870 he sent a further £72. Servants' Ledgers disclose the numbers of the bills, tallied in the year *following* the issue of the bill; thus the ledger entries for 1854 show the cashing of bill No. 934, which was issued in 1853. This number corresponds to one in a register of servants' and settlers' bills; such registers survive, scattered among the general accounts of York Factory, and are supplemented by a few cumulative registers, so that servants' bills on London may all be traced in six volumes covering 1821 to 1871.²⁴ Anderson's bill of 1854 duly appears (B.239/d/1015 fo. 37), drawn in favour of Christina Anderson. No. 934, drawn on 28 June 1853, appears in the accounts for 1854, for it could not have been presented and cashed until the end of calendar 1853. A confusion of dates may have led him to forget to remit money the year before he retired, thus causing his wife's distress. In any event the number of bills issued on his account corresponds to the number returned against his ledger account and in other respects all his accounts balance. The missing remittance, whether by Anderson's error or an oversight at Edmonton or York, was never sent.

22 HBCA: A.5/22 p. 176, "Private Instructions for the Company's Agents", 22 Nov. 1858.

23 Between Book Debts and Bills on London appeared a column for Credit Balances of Book Debts at Districts, which was almost never used.

24 These important registers of bills are B.239/d/272 (1821-5), d/279 (1825-6), d/299 (1826-7), d/735 (1827-49), d/1015 (1849-62) and d/1213 (1862-72).

During his second career Anderson sent even larger sums, but only the first, £10 in 1865, was payable to Christina. Subsequent remittances of £10 a year, and two for £11 in 1868, were payable to John Robertson, about whom nothing more is known. By this time some servants, including Métis, were remitting considerable sums to Orkney merchants especially one George Halcro, presumably for private orders; but as John Robertson received bills from no one but Edward Anderson, he was likely either a friend or a merchant from whom Christina drew her groceries, as she had done from Peter Williamson in the 'fifties.

Abstracts of Anderson's accounts from 1854 to 1856 also showed debits to "Sundry Accounts." These transactions were transfers of his surplus wages (his "fur trade balance") to an interest-bearing account in London. Probably no other use was made of the sundry accounts column, or of "Credits, Sundry Accounts" where withdrawals from London to the fur trade were recorded, to cover over-spending of wages.²⁵ The abstracts ended with columns reporting balances at year's end (the basic tool for establishing linkage between a servants' records in one volume of the abstracts and the next) and another column isolating the portion of a servants' debt that exceeded a year's wages. This portion was considered a bad debt and 90% of it was written off in computing the assets of the Department. Servants rarely fell so far into arrears unless they died or deserted while in debt. One final column was devoted to remarks, rarely entered but sometimes used to note the manner of a servant's departure in mid-year.

TRACING BEHAVIOUR INLAND.

Wage, shop and banking accounts have obvious short-comings as sources for collective or individual biography; records originating at the post and district level may fill gaps. These records include much of the voluminous B. series in the HBCA, in which post journals (a), correspondence books (b and c) and accounts (d) all help flesh out the bare bones of the statistical record. Apart from post records, the governors' correspondence contains a good deal of labour-related material among the incoming letters. (See especially D.5/1-52, 1821-60.) Of particularly consistent value are the winter express letters from every district. These routinely commented not only on trade but on problems of morale or manning levels, and on the individual qualities of servants contemplating retirement or seeking promotion. Correspondence of this sort is reasonably common, too, in private collections of fur trade officers' papers.

Many private collections consist of little but the personal remarks of gentlemen to their cronies and their mothers. These may be valuable for studies of the higher levels of the service, but even among collections of this sort one may find such useful items as a collection of bawdy voyageur songs in the Ermatinger MSS in the Public Archives of Canada, or a mine of information on Saskatchewan River navigation in the 'forties contained in three Columbia Express journals in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC). Two exceptional general collections are the papers of Chief Factor Donald Ross of

²⁵ E.g. HBCA: B.239/g/12-23, Murdo McLeod (a) of Shather Aird, Stornoway. More normally a servant left his London account intact until retirement.

Norway House, now at PABC with microfilm copies elsewhere, and Hardisty family papers in the Glenbow-Alberta Institute in Calgary.²⁶ These collections are large and contain much of a semi-official character. Many journals and letter-books which ought, perhaps, to have remained in the Company's hands in the nineteenth century, passed into private possession and eventually resurfaced in public repositories. Because of the pervasive importance of wage labour in the fur trade, even the smallest of these private collections, scattered from Ontario westward, may contain material reflecting servants' lives, work, and characters.

Nevertheless, the HBCA are the major source. District posts tend to have preserved more consistent records than less important places, but the Company's early policy was to maintain complete records of its business. A standing rule of 1828 required every district and post to submit an annual "Journal of transactions and occurrences" with comments on the trade, copies of all official letters, abstracts of provisions consumed by officers, engagés and their dependants, and a general abstract of the Indian population.²⁷ Where this regulation was kept the results are obviously of great value; but the data had to be compiled at the busiest time of the year, so apart from journals and trading accounts little social data was systematically transmitted.

Even a post's own records were not always well preserved. Chief Trader James Anderson found many of Fort Simpson's papers in 1852 "mutilated, missing, or filled with ribald remarks."²⁸ In short, district and post records do not offer long runs of systematically organized data of the same value as the York Factory accounts. Particular narrow fields may be barren: there are, for example, no Lesser Slave Lake post records (B.115) of any sort for the period when Edward Anderson worked there. Local information on his career is either scattered through the Edmonton records, dispersed in private collections, or irretrievably lost.

There are, nonetheless, exceptional sources in unusual places. The English River District lists of servants (B.89/f/1 fos. 14-21) include ration lists for seven posts in the district in a single year, 1871. There were, excluding pensioners, 82 officers and servants, wives of 54 of them, 20 children over 12, and 110 children under that age. At the head post of Ile à la Crosse the estimated annual ration bill was equal to the wage bill. The York Factory Miscellaneous series includes (B.239/z/29 p. 441) a similar ration list for York and its four sub-districts in 1867. There are manuscript census documents in the Hardisty MSS in Calgary for the early 1870s; and so on. Sources such as these are not too rare, but it is only by chance (or by careful tailoring of research topics) that the historian may find good local social data for a year and district in which he might be interested.

26 PAC: MG 19 A 2 Series 2 vol. 4; PABC: A-B-20.4-L95, L95j, and C38, Columbia Express Journals of Thomas Lowe (1847-48) and John Charles (1849); Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Hardisty MSS (H264C file 32 item 150), Lawrence Clarke's Census of "French Métis" population of St. Laurent, 31 Dec. 1871. After the names of 64 hunters Clarke has observed that "Not one of those Hunters have made less than £100 Sterling since last 1st June, many of them clearing from £200 to £500 sterling."

27 *Minutes of Council, 1821-31*, Fleming ed.: 220, Standing Rules (1828) No. 8.

28 PABC: Add MS 635/518, Anderson to Ross, 11 March 1852.

LABOUR RECORDS OF HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

in less than an hour's time the ground was covered

Friday 25th Sept^r
 The weather was fine today & the snow that fell last night disappeared before noon. We were from any where

Saturday 26th
 An Indian arrived with a bag and the meat of a buck mope upon it sent by Mr Campbell from Bay Brins. By a letter from him I am happy to find that all his well with him, the weather being fine today James & the women secured 28 bags of Potatoes

Sunday 27th
 The weather continued fine, the Indian did not go off

Monday 28th
 We were from any Quater. We secured 11 bags of Potatoes today the weather very fine & warm

Tuesday 29th
 Two Indians arrived from Fort Sturman because of a letter from Mr Bell at Fort Good Hope conveying to us the melancholy information that two of our men John Swatler & Munde Merriam were drowned on their way down to Fort Good Hope with the wife of that Port. The boat grounded on a sand bank within a few hours travelling of the Port and the men got into the water to push her off but the water being shallow all round the boat Swatler went to examine for deeper water into which he arrived so suddenly that he fell in, and Merriam with the intention of assisting him washed into the same danger and both sunk together alas to rise no more this is the report of the steerman (Capt. William) who was in the boat and the third man of the Party.

This is an most unfortunate accident in our present situation. It rained in the forenoon and blew hard from the north the remainder of the day

Wednesday 31st
 The weather was fine and mild today. The Fort & Roman Indian went off. Three Indians (Sorem & his two brothers) arrived with the meat of three Moose deer half dried & 11 lbs of grease. They came down the St^o Nicolas River. We secured 4 bags of Potatoes today & dried which we tanned a piece of ground as large as that out of which we got 28 bags on Saturday

Thursday 1st October
 With the assistance of the Indians who arrived yesterday we secured 48 bags of Potatoes today. In the evening the Indian went off equipped for the winter which they intend to pass in the vicinity of the Port. The weather mild with much the appearance of rain.

65

Fort Simpson Journal, 26-29 September 1835. This journal is a good example of documents of HBC provenance which found their way through private hands to public repositories. Drownings such as the ones recorded here were among the commonest causes of accidental death among fur trade servants, especially in the Mackenzie River district. (PAC: MG 19 D 6 vol. 2, p. 65.)

25

Sum Red River Co by Sanders Cutler 1836 Contin^d
 Amount brought forward 11612 3

	\$ Arctic Exped: Cost ^d	71	44	4	
	4 By Chains	76	19	4	
4	Unc ^d paid Mr. Sjartov		1	0	
	Gifts Unt ^d Ducharme		12	0	
	2 P ^d Sledge Chais		19	0	
	2 Sashment Skins	4	0	8	
1	Cash paid Louis Steep		16	0	
20	For Freight V.				
	5 P ^d Allow ^d for Mr. Simpson's passage from Norway H ^o to Red River	1	0	0	
	2 lbs Gunpowder (per 20)	18	0	3 1/2	
	4 " Shot	7	0	2 1/2	
	1 doz Gunflints		0	3	
	2 " Wire Gunwires		0	1	
	10 Bar ^s Cedarburg ^s	8	5	0	8 0 2

45
 June 5 P. M. Finiaus River Dist Cost^d
 In wages of the follow^g men who
 performed the voyage to and from
 Arlay to Sear^s V.

George	Suniver	Guide	25	0	
Thomas	Sitt	Sherman	16	0	
Francis	Sicri	"	11	0	
Gull ^m	Schbau	"	11	0	
Pierre	Sayer	"	16	0	
J ^r	Flamou	Deusman	11	0	
B ^s	Luvati	"	14	0	
Alain	Mc Kay S.	"	14	0	
Paul	Sicri	"	14	0	
Louis	Blondin	Traddman	12	0	
A ^s	Bolau	"	12	0	
Gene	Bonard S.	"	12	0	
Franco	Comptois	"	12	0	
Paul	Challivair	"	12	0	
Alain	Tanet	"	12	0	
Joseph	Quintas	"	12	0	
Charles	Glade	"	12	0	
	Carried forward		250	0	1140 1/4 3

WILSON'S EXP. COMPANY

District Transfers, 1836. Extract. Lists of casual servants are scattered through the accounts of employing districts or of other districts that issued trade goods or rations to passing brigades. A short series of Portage La Loche brigade lists in the York Factory District Transfer books for the 1830s establishes that fewer than half the Red River tripmen made two trips in a row on the difficult Portage route. (HBCA: B.239/cc/6 pp. 109-110.)

Lower Red River Co. By Sundries Outfit 1831 Continued
 & Amount brought forward

Date	Description	Quantity	Price	Total
1837 Jan ^y	25 th M ^r Stenard's River Trip & outfit cost			251
	Antoine Hood & middleman		12	
	J ^o ns Sumner		12	
	J ^o ns Larocque Junior		12	
	J ^o ns Mattette		12	
	J ^o ns Truettie		12	
	J ^o ns M ^r Day		12	
	Joseph Morrison		12	
	Joseph Nadeau		12	
26	Wm ^o paid Geo. Lumsden for mail & Cars		3	
	20 lbs Dried Meat	2 ⁵	3	
	6 Gallons Rum	12 ¹	3 12	342 15 4
General Charges				
1831 Jan ^y	6 lbs Receipt	5	1 6	
	2 Loaves Bread	1 ⁵	1 4	
	1 lb Hudson Tea		4 10	
	6 " Leaf Sugar	4	6	
	12 " Corned Beef	3 ⁵	3	
	3 Cured Buffalo Tongues	9 ⁵	2 3	
	12 lbs Dried Meat	2 ⁵	2	
	1 Large Bale Cover		1 6	
	1 Small " "		1	
	24 lbs Dried Meat	2 ⁵	4	
	12 " Flour		2	
11	1 " Hudson Tea		4 10	
	6 " Leaf Sugar	4	6	
	20 " Flour	2 ⁵	3 4	
	20 " pemican		3 4	
	20 " Dried Meat		3 4	
	5 Cornaburg Bags	2 ¹	10	
	20 lbs flour	2 ⁵	3 4	
	20 " pemican		3 4	
	20 " Dried Meat		3 4	
	20 " flour		3 4	
	20 " pemican		3 4	
	20 " Dried Meat		3 4	
	Carried forward			4 3 183 9

Archives
of
British Columbia
DONALD RESS
COLLECTION

The Norway House Bell

The working hours at Norway House are to be regulated by the ringing of the Bell, after the first of June 1841 - As follows for the Summer -

Mornings 5 O'clock to rise
Half past 5 to move out to work

Breakfast 7 O'clock to ring in
8 " " to ring out

Noon 1 O'clock to ring in
2 " " to ring out


Evenings Half past 6 to leave off work

The above are to be the regular working hours, but it is always understood, that when necessary, the necessary work is to be done at any hour, night or day, late or early, whenever the occasion requires,

Norway House 26 May 1841
Wm. Ross
(Signature)

248

An Agreement made this *twenty second* day of *June* in the year one thousand eight hundred and *fifty* between *Edward Anderson* aged *fifty* years, formerly of the Parish of *St. Andrew* in the County of *Shetland* of the one part, and the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England, trading into Hudson Bay, represented by *John Cowan Esq* of the other part as follows. The said *Edward Anderson* hereby contracts and agrees to serve the said Company in North America in the capacity of *Middleman* for the term of *two* years to be computed from *1st June 1853*



and for such further term as herein after mentioned,

and devote the whole of his time and labour in their service and for their sole benefit, and that he will do his duty as such, and perform all such work and service, by day or by night, for the said Company as he shall be required to do, and obey all orders, which he shall receive from the Governors of the Company in North America, or other their Officers or Agents for the time being; and that he will with courage and fidelity in his said station, in the said service, defend the property of the said Company and their Factories and settlements; and will not absent himself from the said service, nor engage, or be concerned in any trade or employment whatsoever, except for the benefit of the said Company and according to their orders. And that all goods obtained by barter with the Indians or otherwise, which shall come to the hands or possession of the said *Edward Anderson* shall be held by him for the said Company only, and shall be duly delivered up to the said Governors or other their Officers or Agents for the time being, without any waste, spoil or injury thereto, and in case of any wilful neglect or default herein, he shall make good to the said Company all such loss or damage as they shall sustain thereby, to be deducted out of his wages. And that the said *Edward Anderson* will faithfully obey all laws, orders and regulations established or made by the said Company for the good government of their settlements and territories; and at all times during the residence of the said *Edward Anderson* in North America, he will defend the rights and privileges of the said Company and aid and support their Officers and Agents to the utmost of his power; and the said *Edward Anderson* further engages and agrees that in case he shall omit to give notice to the Governor or Officers of the said Company in North America, one year or upwards before the expiration of the said term of *two* years, of his intention to quit their service and return to *England* longer upon the like terms as are contained in this contract; And the said *John Cowan Esq*, on behalf of the said Company hereby engages, That upon condition of the true and faithful service of the said *Edward Anderson* in like manner as aforesaid, but not otherwise; the said *Edward Anderson* shall receive from the said Company after the rate of

Twenty pounds Sterling
per annum, to commence on and be computed from *1st June 1853*
up to *1st June 1855* as aforesaid and

provided always, and it is hereby expressly agreed between the said parties hereto, that it shall be lawful for the Governor or other Officers or Agents of the said Company in North America, at any time during the said term of *two* years or such additional term as aforesaid, to dismiss the said *Edward Anderson* from their service and direct his return to *England* and in such case his wages are to cease from the *thirtieth day* and further: that in case the said *Edward Anderson* shall at any time during this contract desert the service of the said Company, or otherwise neglect or refuse duly to discharge his duty as such hired Servant as aforesaid, then he shall forfeit and lose all his wages, for the recovery whereof, there shall be no relief either in law or in equity. In witness whereof the said parties have hereunto set their hands at *St. John's 23rd March 1853*.

Signed in the presence of *Edward Anderson*
Alex: Christie

Edward Anderson's second contract, 1853. The printed form is standard for a contract signed inland; the same form was available in French. This contract was executed at the post where Anderson wintered, and although Chief Factor Rowand is listed as making the agreement on behalf of the HBC, the signature is that of a Métis clerk. (HBCA: A.32/20 fo. 246.)

Folio	No	NAME	Age	Parish	Capacity	District	No of Years Service	Contract Expires	Balance 1 Jan. 1853		Wages	Gratuities and Sundry Credits at Discharge	Dr. Transfers in Service	Cr. Transfers in Service	
									Dr.	Cr.					
<u>Northern Department - Agents' Winters</u>															
21		John Joseph		St. Peter		Niemen	1851	1851	90						
		Thoenget		Native		St. Peter	1855		90						
23		Thoenget		Native		St. Peter	1855		186						
24		Harst Joseph		St. Peter		Niemen	1855	1855	90						
25		Allan James		Eden		St. Peter	1857		97 5						
		Allan Thomas		St. Peter		St. Peter	1855		75 5						
26		Andersen Edward		St. Peter		Niemen	1855		90						
27		Andersen Silliam		St. Peter		St. Peter	1857		95						
28		Andersen James		St. Peter		St. Peter	1857		115 11						
29		Andersen James		St. Peter		St. Peter	1856		101						
30		Andersen Peter		Native		St. Peter	1854		96 9						
31		Andersen Louis		St. Peter		Niemen	1855		97 5						
32		Andersen George		St. Peter		St. Peter	1854		91 3						
33		Andersen Henry		St. Peter		St. Peter	1854		111 11						
34		Andersen Joseph		St. Peter		Niemen	1855		139						
35		Andersen William		St. Peter		St. Peter	1855		146						
36		Andersen Peter		St. Peter		St. Peter	1855		55						
37		Augé Antoine		St. Peter		St. Peter	1854		611						
		Carried forward								1199	55	119	133	116	2



Cash Advances in LAND CANADA	Cr. Cash received in ENGLAND & CANADA.	Dr. Balance of Book Debit at Districts.	Cr. Profit and Loss.	Dr. Profit and Loss.	Cr. Bills on LONDON.	Dr. Bills on MONTREAL.	Cr. Sundry Accounts.	Dr. Sundry Accounts.	Balance 1 June.		Remarks.	Balance 1 June, excluding = You's Wages.
									Dr.	Cr.		
		10 3 6								- 8		
		17 12 11								2 - 1		
		17 12 5								- 3 11		
		26 11 3								22 5 1		
		5 1 1								10 3 4		
		1/11/14								11 11		
		5 1 1								20 10 1	Edward Anderson's P. H. Co.	
		13 1 10								2 2 6		
		16 16 5								16 1 7		
		19 12 7					11 5 11			4 17 6		
		17 12 3								7 11 6		
		15 5 4								9 15 7		
		25 5 1								32 9 2	Edward Anderson's P. H. Co.	
		17 12 14								19 12 -		
		30 12 3								1 16 3		
		11 14 2								4 5 2		
		17 11 11								7 12 11		
		23 7 5								2 1 11		
		22 1 4								6 7 2		
										10 9 1		
										32 10 2		

Abstracts of Servants' Accounts, 1853-54. Extract. *The abstracts summarized in a single line all the debit and credit entries from each servant's ledger account (B.239/x), personal data from the engagement registers (B.239/u) and place of employment from the district statements (B.239/l). Pencilled insertions and deletions in the "Name" column show changes to be made in the 1854-55 volume. The pencilled note beside Edward Anderson's account reminds the accountant at York Factory to transfer Anderson's balance to an interest-bearing account in London. (HBCA: B.239/g/33 fos. 8d-9.)*

J.P. Edward Anderson *J.P.*

1854	To Goods at Sashatone	9 - 8		1854	By Balance b/wm	20 8 6
	To Ditto Bishops	4 7 7	13 5 5	1855	By Wages	17 - -
	To Billen London 1854					
	To Balance		20 - 3			
			37 5 6			37 5 6
1852	To Goods at Sashatone	1 5 6		1853	By Balance 1 st June	20 - 3
	To Ditto Bishops	3 15 5	5 - 11	1854	By Wages	20 - -
	To Billen London 1852					
	To Balance		30 19 4			
			30 19 4			30 19 4
1853	To Hudson's Bay Co. b/wm		30 19 4	1854	By Balance 1 st June	30 19 4
	To Goods at Sashatone			1855	By Wages	20 - -
	To Ditto Bishops					
	To Billen London 1853					
	To Balance		57 19 4			
			57 19 4			57 19 4
1856	To Hudson's Bay Co. b/wm		57 19 4	1855	By Balance 1 st June	57 19 4
	To Goods at Sashatone			1856	By Wages	20 - -
	To Ditto Bishops					
	To Billen London 1856					
	To Balance		23 9 6			
			23 9 6			23 9 6
1857	To Hudson's Bay Co. b/wm		23 9 6	1856	By Balance 1 st June	23 9 6
	To Goods at Sashatone			1857	By Wages	20 - -
	To Ditto Bishops					
	To Billen London 1857					
	To Balance		9 17 2			
			9 17 2			9 17 2
1858	To Hudson's Bay Co. b/wm		9 17 2	1857	By Balance 1 st June	9 17 2
	To Goods at Sashatone			1858	By Wages	20 - -
	To Ditto Bishops					
	To Billen London 1858					
	To Balance		24 1 2			
			24 1 2			24 1 2
1855	To Hudson's Bay Co. b/wm		24 1 2	1858	By Balance 1 st June	24 1 2
	To Goods at Sashatone			1859	By Wages	20 - -
	To Ditto Bishops					
	To Balance		15 1 2			
			15 1 2			15 1 2
1859	To Goods at Sashatone		15 1 2	1855	By Balance 1 st June	15 1 2
	To Wages in England			1856	By Wages 53 wks. Sashatone	5 11 1
				1857	By Balance	2 11 5
				1858	By Wages	2 11 5
				1859	By Balance 1 st June	2 11 5
1856	To Balance 1 st June		2 11 5	1861	By Wages	2 11 5

Servants' Ledger, 1853-62. Extract. The ledgers collected data from York Factory and district accounts to allow the calculation of a servant's balance at the end of each year. Ledger accounts offer researchers the advantage of viewing up to a decade's information on a single page; but the abstracts of accounts (B.239/g) show much more detail for each year. (HBCA: B.239/x/6a p. 126.)

NORTHERN DEPARTMENT BILLS. *en Soudenen*

Folio.	No.	Where drawn.	Date.	By whom drawn.	To whom payable.	Sight.
	<i>925</i>	<i>York Factory</i>	<i>June 1</i>	<i>William Macleod</i>	<i>James Morrison</i>	<i>Sight</i>
	<i>926</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John H. Gillan</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>927</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>William C. man</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>928</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Anderson</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>929</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John Hood</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>930</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Ellen Stewart</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>931</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>George Brown</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>932</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John H. Gillan</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>933</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>William C. man</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>934</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Anderson</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>935</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John Hood</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>936</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Ellen Stewart</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>937</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>George Brown</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>938</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John H. Gillan</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>939</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>William C. man</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>940</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Anderson</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>941</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John Hood</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>942</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Ellen Stewart</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>943</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>George Brown</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>944</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John H. Gillan</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>945</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>William C. man</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>946</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Anderson</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>947</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John Hood</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>948</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Ellen Stewart</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>949</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>George Brown</i>	<i>"</i>
	<i>950</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>John H. Gillan</i>	<i>"</i>

account of accounts **OUTFIT.**

Sight.	On whom drawn and what Place.	AMOUNT.		REMARKS.
		On Account of Fur Trade.	Private Accounts with the Hudson's Bay Company.	
<i>925</i>	<i>York Factory</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>926</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>927</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>2</i>		
<i>928</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>929</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>930</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>931</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>932</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>933</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>934</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>935</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>936</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>937</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>938</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>939</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>940</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>941</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>942</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>943</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>944</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>945</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>946</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>947</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>948</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		
<i>949</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>950</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>5</i>		

Servants' Bills, 1853. Bills on servants' wage (or "fur trade") accounts were screened before being signed by the officers in charge of York Factory or Red River, to ensure that the accounts would cover the withdrawals. (HBCA: B.239/d/1015 fos. 36d-37.)

957

Lerwick 22 Decr 1857

Sir

My Husband Edward
Anderson who is in the
Hudsons Bay Service wrote
me sometime ago stating
that he had sent me
Five Pounds which has
not yet come to hand
and as I am very much
at present it would oblige
me very much if you
could advance me the
Five Pounds on his
account

account, I am led to believe that he has omitted to enclose the check and the more so from his Regularity in sending me Small Sums annually. If you Comply with my request please to send it on to Mr Peter Williamson Merchant Lerwick Shetland as I have been receiving some Supplies from him for my Family and had it not been for Mr Williamson's humanity since my

Christina Anderson, Lerwick, to Secretary of Hudson's Bay Company, London, 22 Dec. 1857. Much of the business of temporary out-migrants in the HBC service from the north of Scotland was handled by the Company's northern agents. Individuals sometimes wrote to the Company directly, especially when their cases were unusual ones. A servant's funds were not issued to either his creditors or his dependants unless he gave written permission or spoken instructions to a senior officer in the HBC territories. (HBCA: A.10/42 fo. 557.)

See pages 78-80

Husband left here I and
my children could not
have been alive.

expecting your answer soon

I am

Your Most
her

Christina Anderson
mark

L J Henderson witness to her mark



M. Dow Cowie has already
sent you the note from my
Husband wherein he said that
the Fine Views was enclosed

C. A.
T. W. G. Smith Esq
Secretary Hudson Bay House
London

Schedule of Officers and Servants at the Establishment of Lac du Brochet		District		Year		1871		Remarks
Name	Capacity	Wages	Expenses	Age	Children	Provision		
<u>Officers</u>								
1. G. S. Smith	Supervisor	24	-	-	-	1872	1	1 2 5 - 1 6
2. W. S. ...	Chief	28	-	-	-	1872	1	3 3 5 - 2 -
<u>Servants</u>								
3. B. ...	Labourer	22	-	2	-	1873	1	1 3 5 - 1 3
4. W. ...	Labourer	25	-	2	-	1873	1	1 2 5 5 - 2 -
5. V. ...	Labourer	34	-	2	-	1873	-	1 3 5 - 1 -
6. W. ...	Labourer	30	-	2	-	1874	-	1 3 - 9
7. S. ...	Labourer	35	-	2	-	1872	1	2 4 3 5 - 2 9
8. A. ...	Labourer	40	-	-	-	1872	1	1 2 2 5 5 - 2 -
9. H. ...	Labourer	25	-	2	-	1873	1	1 2 3 - 1 6
10. J. ...	Labourer	27	-	2	-	1872	1	2 5 4 5 - 3 -
		384	-	14	-		8	6 10 23 5 - 17 9

etc. The principal source of the Post is fish the other date. Returns of fish is given each 9 months in the year and 3 months. Returns is given in Pension. See 2 fish. Paid 20 40.

(Signed) William Whiteaway

Lac du Brochet (English River District) Staff and Ration List, 1871. As profits slumped in the 1860s the Company became increasingly conscious of the cost of rationing employees' families. Servants' sons over the age of 12 were sometimes engaged as apprentice labourers until they were old enough to take an oar in the district brigade. (HBCA: B.89/f/1 fo. 21.)

THE PLACE OF LABOUR IN THE TRADING ECONOMY.

In the Northern Department before 1871 labour was the largest single source of expense apart from trade goods. The trading system was so labour-intensive, and so dependent on the resources of the country, that even the cost of fixed capital assets—chiefly forts and boats—was almost nothing more than the cost of the labour required to build them. Many efforts to control the cost and ensure the productivity of labour are recorded in the annual Minutes of Council of the Northern Department.²⁹ Although the dry spirit of the regulations does not always reflect the fluidity of practice, these Minutes show the Commissioned Officers' work in conjunction with the governors to define privileges and perquisites, limit private trade, adjust the size of crews and cargoes, and regulate the hiring, deployment and payment of hundreds of casual and permanent employees. More important, the cryptic resolves of Council help direct attention to appropriate annual reports and other official correspondence of the governor, both in the London series (A.6 and A.12) and in the papers of the HBCA "D" class, the records of the top North American officials themselves.

Servants' privileges were clearly defined to control the grant of costly non-cash benefits by lenient district officers. Private enterprise by employees was curbed by regulations to protect the Company's trading position with the Indians. In some cases, such as private trade in horses in Saskatchewan and Peace River, regulations were a dead letter. Although every year's Minutes contain some regulations on such subjects, the major collections are the Standing Rules and Regulations of 1828 (published with the rest of B.239/k/1 by the Champlain Society in 1940), and the revised versions of 1836 (from B.239/k/2, published by the Dominion Archives in 1913.) The HBCA (B.239/k/22) contains a MS volume of extracts to 1841 relating only to labour, and PABC has a MS copy of the Standing Rules of 1843 annotated with all changes to 1874. These Council documents, with the standard contract forms and supporting correspondence, outline the terms of employment which the Company imposed on its servants and which, occasionally, the servants enforced on their employer. For as Chief Factor Clare grumbled at York Factory in 1863, the men were quite capable of forming "into combinations refusing to work if their demands were not complied with; they seem to be understanding the power they have in their hands when acting in a body."³⁰

Labour's place in the Company's balance sheet may be roughly quantified through the Northern Department's annual current accounts for 1830-72 (B.239/v/1-5). These ledgers offer a view of the cost of permanent labour in the broader context of Company operations. Although the series is too large to discuss here in detail, its uses may be suggested by two examples from Cumberland district, 1831-2 and 1868-9. The department was divided into a series of accounting centres, virtually dummy companies, representing the dis-

29 See note 20 for principal sources. HBCA: B.239/k/22 consists of extracts of Minutes relating to labour up to 1841. Also B.135/k/1, Moose Factory, Southern Department Minutes of Council, 1822-75; the southern council met only half as frequently as its northern counterpart, but its decisions were not necessarily identical to those in force in the larger department. For Northern Department minutes after 1870, see HBCA: B.154/k in Winnipeg.

30 HBCA: A.11/118 p. 438, Clare to Secretary, 13 Sept. 1863.

tricts, past and future fiscal years (or "outfits"), and notional entities such as the Mackenzie River freight establishment.

Each account showed debits, charges against the district, on the left side, facing credits, or real and paper assets, on the right. In 1831 the principal charges against Cumberland were £271 owed to the Northern Department for "Inventory" or goods and equipment on hand at the start of the outfit. £473 was owed to York Factory shops for the current year's imports, £191 to the previous outfit for local food-stuffs and produce carried forward, £115 to neighbouring districts for goods and services received in 1831-2, and £102 to the department for servants' wages. On the credit side, Cumberland supplied goods and services worth £314 to other districts, carried over £347 worth of goods and equipment to 1832, and exported furs and other returns to Europe worth £2636. There is little similarity between these figures and those recorded 38 years later. Returns had more than doubled in value to £5483, based on average recent London sales; but the cost of doing business had multiplied seven-fold to £8239. Of this the direct charge for permanent labour was £1535, or 15 times the earlier figure. And compared to profits of £2206 in 1831-2 (83.7% of the value of returns) a small loss of £50 was reported in 1868-9.

Interesting comparisons can be made concerning the place of labour costs in the sample years. The true cost of labour was a compound of three main items: wages and gratuities to permanent servants; goods expended to equip and ration servants; and trade goods expended to pay and ration casual servants. Cumberland made no profit on its workforce, though the York shops may have made a small one. Of these three basic elements of the cost of labour, only permanent servants' wages can be measured directly from B.239/v. The figures provided do offer insights into the way the HBC labour system had altered in relation to changes in the commercial system as a whole. In general, revenues and expenses had both increased in Cumberland between 1831 and 1868, but outlay easily outstripped the growth of returns. The wage bill was 9% of the total cost of doing business in 1831, 18.6% in 1868. The cost of labour compared to the total cost of imported goods expended was 28.2% in 1831, 41.7% in 1868; in these terms, the cost of delivering goods to the Indians had increased by two-thirds. Yet, if the comparison is made with returns rather than goods, wages consumed a negligible 3.9% of revenues in 1831, a substantial 28.2% in 1868. These ratios, with the raw profit and loss figures themselves, help demonstrate the two-pronged financial effects of competition, which began in Cumberland about 1850. Not only did "free trade" drive up the price of furs, it also compelled the Company to keep more men on hand year-round. Rising food prices and general wages rises in 1858 also played a part. Based on this small and perhaps unrepresentative sample, one may hypothesize that the collapse of the Company's monopoly severely reduced the cost-effectiveness of its permanent workforce. The contribution of labour costs to the HBC's generally weakened financial position after 1859 may be measured in some detail through the data recorded in the Accounts Current, B.239/v/1-5. More exhaustive research and analysis, including moving averages, could help control for distortions due to fluctuating stocks of furbearers; but the declining productivity of labour in the face of competition was likely a feature of the trade in all districts, even the most remote.

The problem was particularly acute because more work, not less, was being assigned to seasonal servants—winter hunters and trappers, native to the employing districts or to the Red River Settlement, who worked as tripmen in the summer. Therefore a large part of the cost of imported goods was actually a disguised labour cost. Sprague and Frye have noted the absence of detailed registers of short-term employees, yet there are valuable sets of tabular time-series data that allow us to reconstruct much of the seasonal workforce for most years between 1830 and 1870. District account books from York Factory and Norway House help identify brigades which used the waterways from Lake Winnipeg to the Bay, particularly the scores of Indians who were by the 1860s handling perhaps half the freight on that vital 350-mile leg of the main transport route. For many years the York “d” series contains “District Tripmen” books such as B.239/d/908 (outfit 1856) which lists 197 tripmen of eight brigades, including the 78 men of the two Red River Portage La Loche brigades. That volume, significantly, does not list the large numbers of local tripmen employed in the York-Norway House brigades, or the private freighters’ men from Red River.

Even the more conspicuous Indian crews such as the Hayes River brigades have attracted little historical attention³¹, but almost every district relied quite heavily on Indians during the transport season. Far-off Mackenzie River was the most dependent on casual brigades, for the Hayes River crews brought its goods to Norway House, the Red River brigades carried them from there to Portage La Loche, and by 1854 Chief Trader Anderson could report that within his local brigade of about seven boats, “one half my crews are Indians; exclusive of them, I have 6 engaged in the service.” Near the Bay this seasonal employment was vitally important to the Indian bands themselves; in remoter districts it was probably of proportionately greater importance to the Company as an economy measure, and was therefore more popular with the central authorities than with officers on the spot.³² Although records of these parts of the labour system are scattered among the general accounts of the districts concerned, or in such obscure series as the District Transfer books (B.239/cc/7 for example) they are very useful for the years in which they do occur. They do not, however, show balances carried forward from one year to the next, so vertical linkage is by no means as easy as it is for permanent servants.³³

31 But see A.J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto: 1974): 213, and C.M. Judd, “Mixt Band of Many Nations”: 139. York Factory Indian work accounts, and the Hayes River freighters’ accounts were kept in Made Beaver.

32 E.G. Anderson’s remark in 1853 that “a large saving could be made by dispensing with Indⁿ Voyageurs”, PABC: A-C-40-An 32.3, Anderson to Simpson, 12 July 1853. Athabasca’s chief Robert Campbell also denounced “the miserable expediency [i.e. expedient] of hiring Indians at treble their worth.” HBCA: D.5/47 fo. 796, Campbell to Simpson, 30 Dec. 1858. Anderson and Campbell were out of touch with the European labour market. For Indians, see A.11/119a fos. 146-52, Fortescue to Secretary, 1 Dec. 1880—an extremely useful document.

33 There is a fine run of District Tripmen’s accounts in B.239/d scattered between volumes 731 (1847) and 1123 (1866); earlier and most later volumes seem not to have survived. Hence the importance of the District Transfers (B.239/cc) which in some cases list in detail the men to whom goods have been supplied outside their home districts. Mackenzie River district tripmen did not travel south of Portage la Loche and Athabasca boats did not go beyond Norway House. The B.239/g series contains tripmen’s accounts for 1829-31 (B.239/g/9 fos. 58-61, g/10 fos. 90-94.) and the series quite consistently lists the names of “summermen”, mostly Iroquois, who manned the governor’s canoe between Lachine and the annual meetings of the Northern Council.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Peculiar features of the labour system of the Western or Columbia Department included the employment of Hawaiian labourers and boatmen, and the substantial role of coastal vessels, including steamers. While York Factory kept a few Scottish schooner men to supply Forts Churchill and Severn, the west coast work-force included seasoned sailors, many from the Thames or north of England ports. Administratively, the HBC treated the west coast and British Columbia interior as an appendage of the Northern Department until 1852, so apart from the fact that contract renewals did not get registered in B.239/u, much of the York Factory documentation applies to the districts west of the Rockies. After 1852, Fort Victoria became the depot and accounting centre for the west side, and it has a series of abstracts of servants' accounts (B. 226/g/1-18) of its own. The same is true of Montreal (B.134/g) and of Moose Factory (B.135/g) for the Southern Department. In general these depots did not preserve the elaborate series of accounts that are still to be found from York Factory; the B.134/d accounts are particularly disappointing, while a gap in the Moose accounts (B.135/d) runs from 1830 to 1860. As in the Northern Department, the more local records of individual posts may give surprising opportunities for detailed study and analysis; but by far the most promising openings for further research appear to lie in the records of the territory north and west of Lake Superior.

CONCLUSION

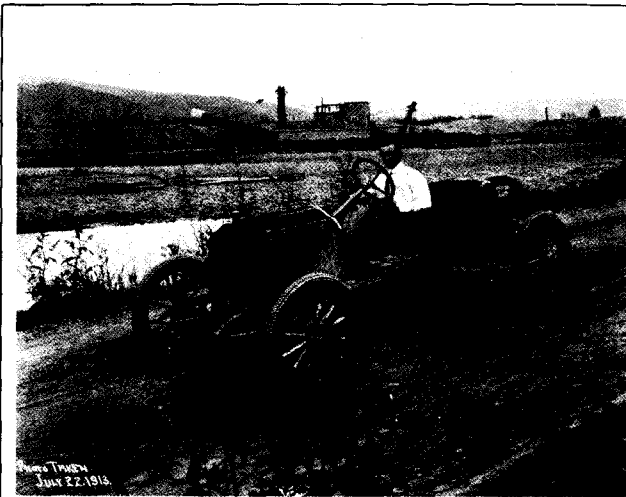
The lives of labouring men in the HBC territories were far from typical of workers' experiences in British North America generally. Extreme isolation, technological backwardness and distance from centres of marketing and administration all contributed to the uniqueness of the working environment, but likewise to the quality of the written record. Central control depended on exhaustive documentation.³⁴ Much of this record is useful chiefly to the student of the West before Confederation, in particular as it bears on the efforts of Métis and Indians to maintain a degree of economic independence and a choice of diversified employment. Other historians will be attracted by excellent sources for detailed studies of small samples of the Scottish and Canadian labouring classes who chose an unusual form of long-term migratory work. From the choices and behaviour of such men, reported in their own words or in the letters of the agents who hired them, much can be learned about conditions and aspirations in the communities from which they came. Fur trade records are impaired as sources for general social history by the unusual nature of the men's employment, and the out-of-the-way places from which they

34 The completeness of annual accounts owed a great deal to the Commissioned Officers' collective agreements ("Deeds Poll") with the London management. These officers' pay and pensions could not be accurately computed without a standard measure of annual profit or loss. See Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North 1870-1914* (Toronto, 1971): 62; "Finally, in 1893, when the results for outfit 1891 had been received, the company abolished the profit-sharing system. . . . Bookkeeping and recording procedures were greatly simplified by ending the necessity to keep separate accounts for every year's trade, or to differentiate between the fur trade and other business operations."

came. Nonetheless, the highly specialized and untypical nature of the documents may be set against their extreme detail, consistent format over several generations, and built-in linkage checks. The York Factory records in particular invite historians to approach their subject on as broad or narrow a scale as they wish, studying individuals, cohorts, or labour as a factor in the economic system of the fur trade. The scarcity of such coherent manuscript collections for nineteenth-century Canada makes research in the HBC's labour records a promising source for Canadian social and working-class history, despite the eccentric aspects of the subject matter.

Résumé

Les archives de la Baie d'Hudson contiennent une foule d'informations sur une grande variété de sujets de recherches canadiens. La vie et la condition d'emploi des travailleurs est un sujet qui a été beaucoup négligé et n'a commencé à retenir l'attention des chercheurs que tout récemment. L'auteur a examiné comment les archives de la compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson, relatives à l'emploi, pourraient révéler la façon dont ces travailleurs avaient été recrutés, qu'ils étaient, quand, pour combien de temps et sous quelles conditions ils ont servi les intérêts de la compagnie au Canada. La période couverte commence avec l'intégration de la compagnie du Nord-ouest jusqu'à la concession de la charte en 1870.



Victoria Faulkner Collection

Yukon Archives and Records Services

Located at: 2nd Ave. and Hawkins St. Box 2703,
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6
Phone: 403-667-5321; Telex: 036-8-260

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