

The Cycle of Commerce: York Factory Records of Hudson's Bay Company Supplies for the Northern Department, 1843-1845

by RUTH MAY*

Introduction

In his article, "The Early Hudson's Bay Company Account Books as Sources for Historical Research," Arthur J. Ray examines the period prior to 1763.¹ As he points out, these early account books are very complex, and scholars are often frustrated in their attempts to use them. The later records are no less confusing. Recently, while searching in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives for data on morbidity and nutrition at York Factory during the 1840s, I was confronted with a maze of record books containing valuable information on these subjects. It soon became apparent that I had to acquire a basic understanding of these records in order to be able to differentiate between the supplies used at York Factory (YF) and those distributed from York Factory to districts throughout the Northern Department.

The Northern Department included the entire drainage system of Hudson Bay, a vast region known as Rupert's Land which stretched from Hudson Bay on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the west, south to the United States boundary and north to the Arctic. It was divided into districts which, in 1843, were Athabasca, English River, Cumberland, Saskatchewan, Swan River, Red River, McKenzie River, Lac La Pluie, Norway House, Island Lake, Severn, Churchill, and York Factory. The districts received supplies from the Northern Department's main depot located at York Factory. The following discussion is a preliminary analysis of the major record books kept at York Factory for the requisition and distribution of these supplies. Three years are examined, beginning in 1843. This three year cycle will reveal in part the pattern used by the Hudson's Bay Company to requisition and distribute supplies for the Northern Department from 1834 until 1870. It is my hope that this work will serve as an aid to research in these records.

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1 Arthur J. Ray, "The Early Hudson's Bay Company Account Books as Sources for Historical Research," *Archivaria* 1 (Winter 1975-76), pp. 3-38.

During this period, the “law” of the Company was stipulated in the Deed Poll of 1834. The Sixteenth Article is relevant to the supply records:

That for the purpose of ascertaining from time to time the true state and condition of the Stock and Capital and of the Gains and profits of the said Trade, Inventories of such trading Goods provisions and stores as on the first day of June One thousand eight hundred and thirty four, or the usual period of closing the Spring trade of the Outfit of One thousand eight hundred and thirty three and on the same day or usual period in every succeeding year during the continuance of the said Trade, may remain on hand at the several depots Stations or posts in Territories and Places aforesaid occupied in carrying on the said trade....²

As will be explained later, the inventories held in the “several depots” formed the basis of the process used to requisition and distribute new supplies for the Northern Department. As implied above, the trading year for the Company, which began 1 June and ended 31 May, was called an Outfit. Consequently, the years under discussion here concern Outfits 1843, 1844, and 1845.

Supplies were ordered on trade or on private account. This paper discusses only those supplies which were ordered and distributed for the trade. Trade supplies included those required to maintain the Company’s business and items offered for sale from the York Factory shops to HBC officers, clerks and servants. These supplies came from three main sources: imports from England, products produced within the Northern Department, and, to a limited extent, imports from Canada.

The imports from England included manufactured goods and “spirituous liquors” — also staples such as tea, molasses, sugar and biscuits, and, to a lesser degree, luxury foods such as chocolate and sugar candy. Local products from the Northern Department were called “Country Produce” and included indigenous foods and products such as pemican and canoes. A few imports came from Canada and included sundry items such as oxhide shoes and copies of the annual *Almanack* from Montreal.

The requisition and distribution of supplies from England followed a three year cycle. Generally speaking, supplies requisitioned in year one of this cycle were imported in year two and distributed in year three. This cycle is examined through records for supplies requisitioned in 1843, imported in 1844, and distributed in 1845. One item of supply, coffee, is used throughout the discussion to illustrate how these records interconnect or relate to one another.

The time schedule for the requisition and distribution of supplies from the Northern Department (Country Produce) and those from Canada was different from the schedule for those ordered from England, but records of the supplies from all three sources were kept together at York Factory in seven major record books. These record books formed the basis for the requisition and distribution of trade supplies throughout the Northern Department after 1834: (1) the **YF Inventory**, (2) the **YF Scheme Distribution**, (3) the **YF Scheme Indent**, (4) the **YF Indent**, (5) the **YF Northern Department Importation**, (6) the **YF Store Balance Book**, (7) the **YF Expenditure Book**. With the exception of

2 Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), A.37/15, fos. 2-3.

the **YF Indent**, each of these records has a standard format. This would have made it possible to prepare the forms and list the supply items well ahead of the time that any data was entered.³ This, no doubt, accounts for the fact that there are items listed in these records which were not always held in inventory nor requisitioned.

YF Inventory 1843⁴

The Deed Poll of 1834 stipulated that inventory was to be taken in each depot, station, and post throughout the Northern Department every year on 1 June, or at the usual closing date of the spring trade. Accordingly, inventory was taken of the depot stock held in the various locations at York Factory on 1 June 1843 and entered into this record.⁵ Entered also into this record are the inventories of supplies held on this date in depots located at Red River, Norway House, and Oxford House. These auxiliary depots held supplies for the Northern Department on the account of the principal depot located at York Factory.⁶

Supplies are entered under six categories: (1) [General Manufactured Goods], (2) Provisions, (3) Stationery, (4) Medicines, (5) Country Produce, (6) Whole Pieces.⁷ *General Manufactured Goods*, a supplied title, is a large unspecified category of supplies which is arbitrarily so designated for the purpose of this analysis. It includes myriad essential items from adzes to worsted; recreational items, such as jew's harps and playing cards; and trade items, such as beads and blankets. *Provisions* are strictly food and liquor supplies. *Stationery* includes books, such as English primers; maps; office supplies, such as ledger books; and writing supplies, such as ink, paper, and sealing wax. *Medicines* include items such as medicine bottles, medical supplies, and instruments as well as medications and drugs. These four categories — General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, and Medicines — contain the supplies which were imported from England.

Country Produce includes the products which were ordered locally from throughout the Northern Department: provisions, such as pemican and preserved cranberries;

3 Whoever entered the data on these records took advantage of this standardized format to prepare the current Outfit's records by entering the changes in pencil on the previous year's records.

4 HBCA, B.239/aa/76.

5 Inventory was also taken of stock on hand for York Factory post and should not be confused with the inventory of York Factory depot supplies. The York Factory locations listed in HBCA, B.239/aa/76, such as the Doctor's Shop, the Nail Room, the Packing Room, the Slop Room, and the Flour Room, held undistributed York Factory depot supplies. The supplies held in the Officers Shop, the General Shop, the Trading Room, and so forth, were York Factory post supplies. These supplies had already been distributed from York Factory depot and are not part of this inventory.

6 The one hundredth resolution of the Northern Department Minutes of Council of 1841 states, "That an Indent for the Supplies of Red River Settlement, from Europe to be prepared distinctly, from the Northern Department general Indent the former to be made up in transportable packages, under the mark of R.R.S. agreeably to notes appended to the Indent & as many of those Goods to be forwarded after the arrival of the ships in the fall of the year as possible." (HBCA, B.239/k/2, fo.120d) This resolution allowed Red River Settlement to requisition supplies for its own needs independently from the rest of the Northern Department. Red River, however, served as an auxiliary depot for York Factory and as such its depot supplies were counted and ordered with the rest of the Northern Department. It also served as a post. In the same manner as York Factory, Red River post supplies were counted separately from Red River depot supplies.

7 A seventh category is possible, but it is not used here — Imports from Canada, or Canada Goods.

equipment, such as boats; materials, such as plank oak; goods, such as tanned hides; and sundry items, such as garden seeds from Red River Settlement.⁸

Each item listed under the above five categories is arranged alphabetically and assigned a standard weight or measure: ounce, pound, gallon, firkin, keg, yard, each, dozen, gross, hundred-weight, and so forth. This arrangement is maintained throughout all the major record books kept at York Factory for the requisition and distribution of supplies, with the sole exception of the **YF Indents**.

The category for *Whole Pieces* is quite a different matter. The supplies in this category are Provisions or General Manufactured Goods listed under the type of container in which they were received from London: bags of shot, bales of tobacco, bundles of oakum, cans of linseed oil, cases of guns, chests of tea, kegs of gunpowder, and so forth. The quantity of each item of stock held in *Whole Pieces* is added to the same item listed under General Manufactured Goods or under Provisions.⁹ For example, on 1 June 1843, the four depots held a total of eight *Whole Pieces* of brandy: seven 2-gallon kegs and one 1-gallon keg. The 15 gallons, held in *Whole Pieces*, are added to the inventory for brandy listed under Provisions. Consequently, the total amount of brandy held in inventory is listed under the category for Provisions; the portion of this inventory held in kegs is listed under the category for *Whole Pieces*.

Occasionally, it was necessary to convert the quantity of an item held in *Whole Pieces* into the standard weight or measure used for the item under the category for General Manufactured Goods or Provisions. For instance, the total inventory of Congou Tea held in *Whole Pieces* is listed as three chests. This was converted to a total of 252 pounds when it was added to Provisions, and provides, incidentally, the information that each chest of Congou Tea contained an average of 84 pounds.¹⁰

8 The total amount of country provisions held in the Northern Department depots on 1 June 1843 was: 9 firkins of butter, 1200 salted geese, 2 kegs of hog lard, 19,889 pounds of common pemican and 585 pounds of fine pemican. The inventory indicates that all of these provisions were located at York Factory depot. It is evident that the foods listed under Country Produce were only those which were requisitioned and distributed throughout the Northern Department because the people at York Factory enjoyed a number of indigenous foods which are not listed — namely fish, partridge, and rabbit. They also had a few domesticated animals: oxen, cows, pigs and chickens, and a vegetable garden, which were added sources of food, albeit very limited. Following the category for Country Produce is a small, separate record for the freight of *Whole Pieces* from York Factory depot to Oxford House, Norway House, and Red River. There is no indication as to what was contained in these *Whole Pieces*. They are not part of the inventory.

9 Bags corn, bags flour, bags salt, bags shot, kegs pitch, kegs sugar, etc. are also entered under the category for General Manufactured Goods. These were empty containers requisitioned from London to hold corn, flour, salt, etc. The similarity between these terms and those used under the category for *Whole Pieces* can cause considerable confusion.

10 The weights and measures of *Whole Pieces* were recorded in the **YF Whole Pieces Book** for each Outfit. The *Whole Pieces Book* for 1841 or for 1842 (depending upon when the chests of tea were received) would have been used to make this conversion. Unfortunately, the 1842 *Whole Pieces Book* is apparently missing, for it is not listed in the HBCA inventory of manuscripts. This particular record is discussed in more detail under the **YF Store Balance Book 1844-1845**.

Depot supplies held at Red River in 1843 were almost entirely, and those held at Oxford House were totally, in Whole Pieces.¹¹ The Whole Pieces category apparently served to determine the amount of each item of supply held in this form for the purpose of inventory and, as is discussed later, to document the distribution of Whole Pieces throughout the Northern Department.

Thus, the **YF Inventory 1843** provides the total inventory for each item of stock held in York Factory on 1 June 1843 and where it was located. In addition, it provides the inventory of each item of stock held on account of York Factory depot in the auxiliary depots located at Red River, Norway House, and Oxford House. Finally, it provides the total inventory of each item of stock held collectively in these four depots on this date and how much of this inventory was held in Whole Pieces.

Example: On 1 June 1843, 27 pounds of coffee were held in the YF Slop Room and 303 pounds were held in the YF Flour Room, for a total of 330 pounds of coffee held in York Factory depot. At Norway House, 50 pounds of coffee were held in reserve for Athabasca Outfit 1843 and 40 pounds for McKenzie River Outfit 1843, for a total of 90 pounds. None was held in the depots at Red River and Oxford House. The total inventory of coffee held in the Northern Department depots on 1 June 1843 was, therefore, 420 pounds.

The totals for each item held in inventory on 1 June 1843, listed under General Manufacturing Goods, Provisions, Stationery, Medicines, Country Products, and Whole Pieces, were carried over to the **YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844**.

YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844¹²

The **YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844** is a plan for the distribution of the supplies held in inventory as of 1 June 1843. It takes into consideration the supplies to be distributed to each of the districts for Outfit 1843.¹³ It considers the supplies to be distributed to the YF Officers Shop and the YF General Shop for Outfit 1843.¹⁴ It also records the supplies to be reserved for Outfit 1844. Supplies for Outfit 1844 were reserved for Athabasca, McKenzie River, Reserve, and Contingencies.¹⁵

11 The only 1843 inventory for individual auxiliary depot supplies located to date is: "Red River Depot for R.R. Outfit 1843." (HBCA, B.239/aa/24, fos. 163-165) Only two categories are included: General Manufactured Goods and Whole Pieces. It was expected that these data would be carried over to the **YF Inventory 1843** under the ledger heading provided for "Red River Depot for G. Ot. 1843" — G being the letter symbol used to denote Red River. However, aside from some commodities such as gunpowder and sugar, the data are not consistently entered, a curious fact for which no satisfactory explanation has yet been found.

12 HBCA, B.239/r/15.

13 Letter symbols were used to denote the districts. Those in use in 1843 were: A — Athabasca; B — Athabasca — Equipment; C — English River; D — Cumberland; E — Saskatchewan; F — Swan River; G — Red River; I — McKenzie River; K — Lac La Pluie; L — Norway House; M — Island Lake; N — Severn; P — Churchill; Q — York Factory.

14 Separate record books were kept for the 1843 Inventory of, and distribution to these shops (cf., HBCA, B.239/d/644-45, 647-48). Of more particular interest are the accounts which give a detailed listing of the purchases by individual officers, clerks, servants and others from these shops during Outfit 1843 (cf., HBCA, B.239/d/646, 661-62). These accounts are excellent sources of information regarding individuals in "the Country" at this time.

15 All of these reserve supplies appear in the **YF Inventory 1844** (HBCA, B.239/aa/77). Usually the same amounts are indicated, but, occasionally, slightly more or less are given.

This record contains the same six categories of supplies found in the **YF Inventory 1843**. It lists the same items under each category, and Whole Pieces are treated in the same manner, that is, the quantity of an item contained in Whole Pieces is added to the quantity of the same item listed under General Manufactured Goods or under Provisions. The distribution of an item for Outfit 1843, plus the amount to be reserved for Outfit 1844, equals the total amount of the item held in inventory on 1 June 1843.¹⁶

Example: The total inventory of coffee was 420 pounds. The reserves held at Norway House for Athabasca and McKenzie River for Outfit 1843, as indicated in the **YF Inventory 1843**, were duly recorded for these districts, 50 pounds for the former and 40 for the latter. The YF Officers Shop and the YF General Shop received 80 and 100 pounds, respectively, to sell to HBC officers, clerks and servants during Outfit 1843. Coffee supplies reserved for Outfit 1844 included 60 pounds for Athabasca, 40 for McKenzie River, and 40 for contingencies. This is the “schemed” distribution of the 420 pounds of coffee held in inventory as of 1 June 1843 in the Northern Department depots.

Each item in the inventory is similarly “schemed”. This information is carried over to the **YF Scheme Indent 1843**.

YF Scheme Indent 1843¹⁷

This record displays the scheme which was used to determine the need for new supplies for the Northern Department. The scheme provided for the receipt of supplies well in advance of need in order to have sufficient time to forward them to the far outlying districts. To do this, it considered the needs of the Department for three years: Outfits 1843 and 1844, which were planned under the **YF Scheme Distribution**, and Outfit 1845. In addition, it provided for a limited amount of reserve supplies for Athabasca, McKenzie River, and General Stores for Outfit 1846. This ensured that the trade would not be jeopardized by the failure of an annual shipment from England though it was assumed in the scheme that items requisitioned on the indent of the previous year would arrive safely at York Factory in August.

The **YF Scheme Indent** includes the categories for General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, Medicines, Country Produce, and one heretofore not mentioned — Canada Goods.¹⁸ Thus, it itemizes all the supplies to be requisitioned regardless of their place of origin, Canada, England or from within the Northern Department. The category for Whole Pieces is omitted. As previously explained, the quantities of items listed under Whole Pieces are incorporated into General Manufactured Goods or Provisions.

¹⁶ Another 1843 record exists which uses the same ledger format as the Scheme Distribution: the **Scheme Invoices 1843** (HBCA, B.239/r/55). Items in this record are listed under each category in the same manner as in the **Scheme Distribution**. However, only data for Outfit 1843 are entered here, and, unlike the **Scheme Distribution**, Whole Pieces are not added into the category for General Manufactured Goods or Provisions. The title of this record implies a connection with cost accounting. It is believed that this was the scheme used to determine the estimated cost of the supplies to be distributed to each district for Outfit 1843. Cost accounting, however, is outside the scope of this paper.

¹⁷ HBCA, B.239/m/12.

¹⁸ Four items only are entered under Canada Goods: snuffs, oxbide shoes, carrying straps and the *Montreal Almanack* for 1844. Only two items were marked for requisition: the snuff and the *Almanack*.

The supplies to be distributed for Outfit 1843 are listed for each district, for the YF Officers Shop and YF General Shop, and for contingencies. The supplies to be reserved for Outfits 1844, 1845 and 1846 are indicated without these divisions. The amounts for all four Outfits are added together to give the total “schemed” indent for each item.

The stock held for each item of supplies was determined by adding the amount held in inventory on 1 June 1843 to the amount expected on the 1842 Indent from England, “the Country” or Canada, whichever was the case. The supplies held in stock seldom balanced the supplies needed for distribution and reserve. The deficiency or excess was recorded, and items found to be in deficient supply formed the basis upon which decisions were made for the requisition of new supplies.

The amounts to be requisitioned were recorded under a ledger heading for “Indent 1843.” The unit and total costs were added only to the items listed under the categories for General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, and Medicines — in other words, to the items which were to be ordered from England.¹⁹

Example: Coffee supplies for Outfit 1843 included 90 pounds for the districts, 80 for the Officers Shop, 100 for the General Shop, and 30 for Contingencies, making a total of 300 pounds. Four hundred and forty pounds were reserved for Outfit 1844 and 440 for Outfit 1845. One hundred pounds were reserved for Outfit 1846 (60 for Athabasca and 40 for McKenzie River). The total amount, which was to be distributed or held in reserve, was 1,280 pounds. The stock included 420 pounds in inventory plus 448 pounds expected from England in August 1843 on the 1842 Indent, making a total of 868 pounds. This left

19 This cost information was necessary in order to prepare the **YF 1843 Indent**. It was also necessary to determine the annual loss or profit for each depot, station, and post in the Northern Department — a requirement of the 1834 Deed Poll (Article 16). The cost of Country Produce and Canada Goods was also required for this purpose, but it was not entered in the **YF Scheme Indent 1843**. The price list for Country Produce is found in the seventh resolution of the Standing Rules and Regulations set by council in 1843 (HBCA, B.239/k/2, fo. 154d). The price of Country Produce did not change until 1856. (See: **Standing Rules and Regulations, 1843-1857**, HBCA, B.239/k/23a.)

The cost information for supplies from England found in the **YF 1843 Scheme Indent** could have been obtained from either the **Northern Department Importation 1842** record or from the “Inventory of Sundry Merchandise, Property of the Honble Hudson’s Bay Company remaining on hand at York Factory — and at Norway House, Red River, and Oxford House — on Account of York Factory, this first day of June one thousand eight hundred and forty-three — vzt.” This inventory is included among the **Northern Department Inventories — 1843** (HBCA, B.239/aa/24, fos. 21-68). It includes the categories for General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, and Medicines. The categories for Country Produce, Canada Goods, and Whole Pieces are dropped. Since Whole Pieces are incorporated into either General Manufactured Goods or Provisions, the result is an inventory of supplies on hand in the Northern Department depots which had been previously ordered and received from England.

This inventory indicates that only supplies held in the Northern Department depots at York Factory, Red River, Norway House, and Oxford House were considered in preparing the 1843 Indent for England: the figures are identical to those found in the **YF Inventory 1843** and in the **YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844**; they are the same that were used to prepare the **YF Scheme Indent 1843** and, subsequently, the **YF 1843 Indent**. Therefore, previously distributed supplies, held in posts throughout the Northern Department, were ignored in determining the need for new supplies.

The purpose of this particular inventory appears to be to determine the total value of the stock from England on hand at all four depots. It lists the Northern Department’s depot supplies from England as of 1 June 1843, item by item, and gives the unit and a total cost of each item. The entry for coffee establishes once again that 420 pounds were held in the depots. The unit cost was 5 1/4 pence per pound and the total cost was 9/3/9.

a deficiency of 412 pounds. Four hundred forty-eight pounds of coffee were marked for requisition under a ledger heading for the 1843 Indent. This figure was slightly more than the deficient amount in order to round it off to 4 hundredweight. However, this amount was subsequently neatly crossed out and replaced with 336 pounds, reducing the amount of coffee to be ordered on the 1843 Indent to 3 hundredweight. The price of coffee was entered: 5¼ pence per pound for a total of £9/16/0 for 4 hundredweight. A note provides the corrected cost for 3 hundredweight: 42/ per one hundredweight for a total of £6/6/0.

The **Scheme Indent 1843** was no doubt finished soon after the depot inventories were completed. If, indeed, the inventories were taken on 1 June 1843 as dated and not earlier, the date of the 1843 Council of the Northern Department, which began on 10 June, and the time required for communications between York Factory and Red River Settlement, where the meeting was held, mitigated against the council members having had a copy of the 1843 **YF Scheme Indent** for their annual meeting.²⁰ It is not listed in any of the YF Lists of Packets for 1843. In fact, according to this list, no official packet left York Factory between 1 April and 17 August 1843.²¹ It is possible that James Hargrave, Chief Trader and top administrator at York Factory during this period, sent a “sketch” of the 1843 indent to Red River Settlement via the 1 April express.²² If so, it would have been based on his knowledge of the supplies distributed for the previous Outfits and those held in reserve. Governor George Simpson had written to Hargrave on 1 December 1842, “Have the goodness to send for the consideration of Council the Indent you will have prepared for shipment ’44....”²³

It is evident that the council members had some information upon which to base their decisions in regard to the requisition and distribution of supplies. Simpson’s letter to Hargrave, dated 1 July 1843 from Red River Settlement, indicates that he had copies of the requisitions from the districts, for he wrote that he had gone over the McKenzie River requisition with “care and Attention” and had put “distinguishing marks” to articles he thought might be omitted.²⁴ The 1843 minutes of council reveal that a large portion of the council meeting was taken up with this business. It decided the amount of “Pieces” to be

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- 20 George Simpson, Governor-in-Chief of the Hudson’s Bay Company Territories from 1826-1860, wrote, “The distance from the [Red River] Settlement to York Factory, the Company’s principal depot on the shores of Hudson’s Bay in communication with England, is about 700 miles. — Lake Winipeg [sic], which is navigable by decked vessels, forms nearly half the distance. — From thence to the coast, the navigation by a chain of rivers and lakes, is practicable by boats of 3 1/2 to 4 tons burden. — The downward voyage with cargo is usually performed in about 16 days, and the upward voyage in from 5 to 6 weeks.” (HBCA, D.4/32, fo. 106) An express canoe, however, would take less time.
- 21 HBCA, B.239/d/777. According to Hargrave’s journal, the official packet actually left York Factory on 31 March 1843. (HBCA, B.239/a/157, fo. 30d.)
- 22 The 1844 Council had such a sketch. Simpson wrote to Hargrave from Red River Settlement on 15 June 1844: “The Sketch of Indent handed us, appears to have been prepared with much care....” (HBCA, D.4/31, fo. 66)
- 23 HBCA, D.4/61, fos. 15-17.
- 24 HBCA, D.4/29, fos. 16-17.

distributed to each district.²⁵ It set the limit of expenditure for supplies from England.²⁶ It made decisions regarding the requisitions for Country Produce and the amounts thereof which were to be sent from the districts to Norway House for distribution to other parts of the Northern Department for Outfit 1844.²⁷

At this meeting the council also established Norway House as the main depot for Country Produce in the Northern Department. The fifty-first rule of the 1843 Standing Rules and Regulations states:

That all Country and Colonial Produce brought out from the Districts except Returns for Consignment to England, or distribution in the Country, be assumed on account of Norway House, from whence the Districts and Depots be supplied at the established prices, and that all Requisitions for

- 25 For example, it was resolved for the Winter Arrangement for McKenzie River, "That 300 pieces goods in 5 boats manned by 36 Men ... constitute the Current Outfit." For the Summer Arrangement, it was resolved "That Chief Trader Hargrave be directed to prepare and forward in the course of the present Summer about 300 pieces goods to Norway House for Outfit 1844, the same to be transported thence to Portage La Loche in 5 boats to start on or before the 15th June 1844...." (HBCA, B.239/k/2, fos. 136-136d) "Pieces" and "Whole Pieces" are discussed in more detail under the **YF Store Balance Book 1844-1845**.
- 26 The seventy-first resolution states "That the amount of Requisition for England for Shipment 1844, do not exceed £11,000 for the Northern Department, and £4000 for the Red River Settlement, the latter to be packed up separately." (HBCA, B.239/k/2, fo. 142)
- 27 For example, the thirty-fourth resolution states under the Winter Arrangements for Red River:

That the following supplies be provided at the Colony for exportation to Norway House Summer 1844, made up in sound and Transportable packages and purchased at the usual prices — Vzt

35 bus: rough Barley
 3 " french Beans
 12 Cwt good corned Beef
 50 " Biscuit
 34 Oak Boards 13 feet long 7 × 3/4 inches
 8 " do 15 " " 8 × 3/4 inches
 60 Firkins Butter 56 lbs each
 10 half Firkins Butter 28 lbs each
 6 maccarons do
 240 lbs Cheese
 10 bushels Indian corn
 15 Kegs Eggs
 600 Cwt best dried Flour 1st & 2nd quality
 2 Casks Salt Cabbage
 200 best dried Flour 1st quality
 60 Hams
 50 bales dried meat
 500 bags Com. Pemican
 45 Cwt Salt Pork
 4 bush: Onions
 200 portage Straps
 100 pairs best portage Shoes
 10 assortment garden Seeds
 1 Keg salted Suet
 1000 white oak Headings P 8 gn Kegs 26 in long 4 × 3/4 in
 300 " " do " 24 " do 20 " " 6 1/2 × 1"

(HBCA, B.239/k/2, fos. 138-138d)

such Produce, required at the various Districts or Depots, be forwarded to the officer in charge at Norway House, and that they be in sufficient time to enable him to make up the general Requisition thereof for the ensuing year, to be submitted to Council.²⁸

The 1843 council was also concerned with promoting the use of Country Produce from Red River Settlement:

In order to afford a market to a certain extent to the agriculturalists of Red River Settlement, it is [Resolved] 35th That Chief Factor Finlayson be instructed to purchase to the extent of 2000 bushels sound, clean wheat, to have the same Kiln dried —²⁹

The benefit to the Company is revealed in Simpson's letter to Hargrave dated 1 July 1843:

I have likewise to beg that no article of provisions or other supplies that can be procured from Red River Settlement be ordered from England, such as flour, biscuit, cheese, butter, tripe, suet, hams &c, which will relieve us of the freight of those articles from England & afford a limited market to our own agriculturalists.³⁰

The details concerning the requisition of supplies were apparently left to "the gentleman in charge" of York Factory depot and were most likely dictated to a large extent by past practices.³¹ However, correspondence from Simpson to Hargrave indicates that the Governor made his wishes known after the fact in regard to items which had been requisitioned on the 1842 Indent, and he fully expected his recommendations to be implemented in the 1843 Indent.³² Hargrave received this information after the 1843 Scheme

28 HBCA, B.239/k/2, fo. 154d. Hargrave did not pay sufficient attention to this rule, for Simpson wrote him on 5 June 1844, "By the 51st Standing Rule you are instructed to send your Requisition for Country Produce to the Gentleman in charge of Norway House in sufficient time to enable him to make up the general Requisition for the purpose of being submitted to Council; instead of which you have this season forwarded it to Council direct, thereby occupying the time and attention of gentlemen making up the requisition here, which might have been avoided had you attended to the Standing Rule in question. Have the goodness to forward your Requisition in future to Norway House as directed." (HBCA, D.4/31, fo. 56)

29 HBCA, B.239/k/2, fo. 138d.

30 HBCA, D.4/29, fos. 16-17.

31 I am indebted to Shirlee Anne Smith, Keeper of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, for informing me about a memorandum from James Hargrave to D. Finlayson, dated 12 July 1832 (**Hargrave Papers**, PAC Reel C 80 Book 7), which explains the method used to establish the **Scheme Indent** record in 1831. A standard for the expenditure of supplies from England was established by averaging the expenditure of supplies for seven successive outfits. These figures were compiled in the **YF Standard Outfit Book** for 1832 (HBCA, B.239/d/426). This standard was used initially in establishing the data needed to estimate the supplies for Outfits 1833 and 1834. Thereafter, the **Scheme Indent** method itself estimated the amounts needed from England.

32 In a letter dated 3 March 1843, Simpson wrote Hargrave from London, complaining about the **YF Indent 1842**. He noted a number of items which he thought should be omitted "in bad times like the present" and others which he indicated should be applied for on private accounts. For instance, he wrote, "No cheese will be sent from England after this year, as from the specimens of cheese we have had from Red River, it is ascertained that nothing can be better than the produce of our own settlement; indeed, the cheese that I have seen from Red River for several years past, is to my taste preferable to any I get in England, & it is more than probable we shall endeavour to make it an article of export from RR Settlement." (HBCA, D.4/28, fo. 9) Accordingly, the 240 pounds of cheese loaf, which had been entered in the **YF Scheme Indent 1843** to be ordered on the **YF 1843 Indent**, were carefully crossed out, and none was ordered.

Indent was completed, for the corrections conforming to Simpson's edicts can be noted throughout the document; these are neatly made so that one can read the original "schemed" amount. Amounts of other items (such as coffee), which were not specifically mentioned by Simpson in his correspondence, have also been reduced. In a letter dated 1 June 1843, Simpson made it abundantly clear to Hargrave that in spite of the council's set limit of £11,000 he preferred the 1843 Indent to be less than this amount.³³ He also pointed out to Hargrave in an earlier letter that the supplies from England would have to be accommodated in one ship.³⁴

The **YF Scheme Indent** was the formula used by the Company to determine the perceived need for supplies. Subjective judgments and business considerations were then applied in determining the final indent.³⁵ It clearly demonstrates the advance planning of the Company. The overwhelming concern for adequate supplies — food and trade items, in particular — is evident throughout the official and private correspondence. It was a precarious life in spite of all the best precautions that the **YF Scheme Indent** could provide.

The amended **YF Scheme Indent 1843** was used to write the official **YF Indent of 1843**.

The YF Indents of 1843

As previously noted, the supplies listed under the categories for General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, and Medicine were imported from England. Those listed under Country Produce came from within the Northern Department, and those under Canada Goods were, of course, imported from Canada. Therefore, three indents were sent from York Factory in 1843; each will be discussed in turn.

Indent for the Northern Department Shipment from Europe — 1844 — for Fur Trade Outfit 1845

The indent sent to England was by far the largest of the three. Two copies of it are in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.³⁶ Both were signed by Hargrave on 20 September 1843. They are essentially identical. However, one had a total cost of £9563/4/10, and the other, £9560/12/4, a slight difference of £2/12/6. Nonetheless, the cost of the indent

33 HBCA, D.4/29, fos. 16-17.

34 HBCA, D.4/61 fos. 15-17.

35 Simpson to Hargrave, 1 July 1843: "I am aware that gentⁿ in charge of districts & posts very frequently are disposed to complain when the gentⁿ in charge of the depot do not meet their demands in full; but it ought to be understood, that the exposure to such complaints is inseparable from the office, &, therefore, must be borne. The best way of meeting unreasonable applications, or for articles that are unnecessary, is to have none such disposable, & that can only be done by not indenting for them." (HBCA, D.4/29, fos. 16-17)

36 One is classified in B.239/n/35 and the other in B.239/n/72, fos. 350-76. The copy of the **YF 1843 Indent** found in B.239/n/35 has pencilled-in items, data and notes which correspond with those found in the **Indent for the Northern Department Shipment from Europe — 1845** (HBCA, B.239/n/72, fos. 381-407), evidence that this copy of the 1843 indent was retained at York Factory and used to prepare the 1844 indent for Outfit 1846.

was well within the £11,000 limit of expenditure set by council at its June 1843 meeting.³⁷

At first glance, the indent appears to have no particular arrangement. It is not alphabetized, and it lacks the now familiar categories one would expect to find for General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, and Medicines. However, the items are arranged in groups: the blankets are grouped together, the tea, the gunpowder, and so forth. As will be explained later on, each group represents a distinct business firm in England, and, therefore, the arrangement is by business firm even though the names of the firms are not given in the indent.

The information contained in the indent is as expected: name of item, quantity ordered, unit and total cost, all of which is taken directly from the amended **YF Scheme Indent 1843**. Unlike the **YF Scheme Indent 1843**, however, the cost is totalled at the bottom of each page and carried forward to the next.

Example: The entry for coffee is as follows: "3 Cwt Good fresh Coffee 42/. 6/6/." This is exactly as it was entered in the amended **YF Scheme Indent 1843** except that here it was entered as "good fresh" coffee; in the other records, it was entered simply as "coffee raw".³⁸ Coffee was ordered with a group of provisions which included orange chips, chocolate, dried currants, molasses, ginger, black pepper, pimento, honey, caraway seeds, raisins, rice, rum, sugar, and olive oil.

Notes are appended to a number of items. These are often instructions for packaging, but descriptive notes are included, too, such as:

These nails are intended for Boatbuilding alone, and would suit that purpose better were they as long as the '20^d — fine drawn'. — The size and shape of their heads, as now furnished, are quite satisfactory.³⁹

Administrative frustrations and problems are revealed in notes such as the one accompanying the requisition of 400 pounds of extra large round white beads:

As pr: Samples, in Sample Box. In consequence of the non-execution of the order for the Shipment this season, an extra quantity, to make up for the deficiency they occasioned, has been included in the above Requisition: — and it is desirable the packages Containing them should be Shipped next Season among the *last* of the Cargo for this Depot in order that they may be obtained so [sic] soon as the Vessel arrives for the purpose of sending a portion out the same Autumn to Severn River & Saskatchewan Districts for Outfit 1844, and to Norway House for the McKenzie River Districts

37 Hargrave's performance in this regard evidently satisfied Simpson, for he wrote him from Lachine on 20 December 1843, "I notice you have been making considerable reductions in the Indent for shipment '44, & consider the amount, say £1000, independent of the demands of Red River Settlem' moderate; & the attention you have paid to the reduction of tents, table furniture & other et ceteras of a minor description as highly creditable." (HBCA, D.4/30, fos. 33d-34) The 1843 indent, of course, would already be in England by the time Simpson wrote this letter.

38 Other terms vary in the indent. For example, common brown biscuit is entered in the indent as "ship-bread." The latter was apparently the English term in usage for this provision, and the former was used in "the Country."

39 HBCA, B.239/n/72, fo. 352.

Ot.1845, at which places they are of Considerable importance as articles of Trade.⁴⁰

It was a common practice to send to England samples of goods which were being reordered to ensure receiving the same article. A "sample box" was sent along with the indent for this purpose.⁴¹

According to the **YF List of Packets**, a copy of the indent was sent overland from York Factory to Simpson at Lachine on 17 August 1843 and another copy was shipped to the London Office via Hudson Bay, aboard *The Prince Rupert*, on 21 September 1843.⁴²

The Indent for Country Produce for the Supply of York Factory Depot and the Coast Posts during Outfit 1844 as authorized by Council June 1843.⁴³

As previously noted, the fifty-first rule of the Standing Rules and Regulations, adopted by the 1843 Council of the Northern Department, charged Norway House with the responsibility of serving as the principal depot for Country Produce. Therefore, as the title of this indent indicates, the York Factory Indent for Country Produce for Outfit 1844 was intended for the use of York Factory District only.⁴⁴ It is a simple listing of items with the quantities required; no costs are given.⁴⁵ It is dated 1 December 1843.

Authorization by the 1843 Council meant that a copy of the York Factory requisition had to be sent in time for this meeting. The 1843 requisition for Country Produce for York Factory Outfit 1844 was sent to Norway House via the York Factory Winter Express on 10 December 1842.⁴⁶ This being the case, it required a year to requisition, obtain authorization and prepare the York Factory Country Produce Indent for Outfit 1844, and several more months to receive the supplies. In other words, from the time Country Produce was first requisitioned, it took about a year and a half to receive these supplies at York Factory. By the time that Hargrave received authorization for the 1843 indent for Outfit 1844, he would be preparing the 1844 Country Produce requisition for Outfit 1845 for the 1844 council meeting. The Winter Express, which left York Factory around 1 December 1843, most likely contained both the 1843 Indent for Country Produce for York Factory Outfit

40 HBCA, B.239/n/72, fo. 372. By illustrating an exceptional case of distribution, this note reinforces the normal three year cycle, i.e., the indent sent to England in 1843, and received in August 1844, would normally not be distributed until 1845. The note also suggests that supplies for Athabasca and McKenzie River were on a four year cycle: the supplies requisitioned on the 1843 Indent and imported in August 1844, would be sent to Norway House in 1845 and transferred to Athabasca and McKenzie River in time for Outfit 1846.

41 All samples sent to England in 1843 were entered in the **YF Store Balance Book 1843-1844** (HBCA, B.239/t/15). They were expected to be returned to York Factory with the 1844 shipment.

42 HBCA, B.239/d/777, fos. 44d and 46d.

43 HBCA, B.239/n/72, fo. 379.

44 While Norway House was established as the principal depot for Country Produce in 1843, records of the inventory and distribution of these supplies continued to be kept at York Factory.

45 The items requested included: birch bark, corned beef, French beans, butter, fresh eggs, flour, hams, dried buffalo meat, dried onions, common and fine pemican, oak plank, cured pork, garden seeds, pack cord shaganappie, white oak headings for eight- and twenty-four-gallon kegs, leather tents, salted suet, portage straps, and "1 Piece *sound well seasoned* Oak Timber, 9 feet long, 13 inches square: much required for the back of the upper plate of YF fur Store Press." (HBCA, B.239/n/72, fo. 379) The fresh eggs were mostly broken in transit, but Hargrave evidently felt that the few which survived were worth it, for he continued to requisition them year after year.

46 HBCA, B.239/d/777/fo. 42d.

1844 and the 1844 requisition for York Factory Country Produce for York Factory Outfit 1845.

*The Requisition of Sundries from Montreal Department on Account of Northern Department 1844 to be forwarded by Canoes to York Factory Spring 1844*⁴⁷

The 1843 indent for Canada Goods was typically small. In fact, it contained only two items: 50 pounds of snuff (Governor Simpson's mixture) and one copy of the *Montreal Almanack* for 1844. It was signed by Hargrave on 10 August 1843 and presumably was part of the packet containing a copy of the 1843 Indent for England which was sent to Simpson at Lachine on 17 August 1843.⁴⁸ This particular indent was not listed in the Packet Lists; apparently it was not large enough to merit a separate entry.

Thus, the three indents were sent their separate ways: the indent for Canada Goods in August 1843, the indent for England in September 1843, and the indent for Country Produce in December 1843. The Canada Goods and Country Produce were received at York Factory in the spring of 1844, the supplies from England in August 1844. The Country Produce was for the use of York Factory only, and also, most likely, the Canada Goods. The supplies from England, however, were intended for the entire Northern Department, and it is the importation of this indent which will be discussed next.

The YF 1844 Importation from England

1844 Invoice of Shipment

When the importation of the 1843 Indent from England arrived at York Factory in August 1844, it was accompanied by an invoice of shipment entitled: "Invoice of Merchandise shipped on board the Prince Rupert, — David James Herd, for York Factory, consigned to the Governor and Council for account of the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay, Vizt."⁴⁹ It had been signed in London by A. Barclay, Secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company, on 31 May 1844.

In this itemized account the supplies are arranged under the name of the firm from which they were ordered. This then explains the arrangement of the **YF 1843 Indent**; it had been derived from a previous invoice of shipment, most likely the one for 1842. Apparently, this arrangement was used for the convenience of the London Office; grouping together the items to be ordered from one firm would have facilitated the order process. The categories present in the other records were apparently a local record-keeping device and of no concern to the home office.

The **1844 Invoice of Shipment** provided information on the packaging of the supplies and the total cost of the 1844 importation from England. The total cost of the 1844

47 HBCA, B.239/n/72, fo. 378.

48 HBCA, B.239/d/777, fo. 44d.

49 HBCA, B.239/ee/103, fos. 91-109d.

shipment was £9884/3/11, "Errors Excepted," as Barclay carefully added. This was £320/19/1 more than the amount indicated in the 1843 Indent.⁵⁰

Example: Item numbers 413-15 of the **1844 Invoice of Shipment** contain the entries for the importation of coffee. It was shipped in three bags weighing respectively 122, 120, and 120 pounds for a total of 362 pounds. When empty, the weight of each bag was one pound. Three pounds were duly subtracted from the total, leaving 359 pounds of coffee imported at a cost of 44 shillings per hundredweight, for a total of £7/1/1.

Under the firm name of Petty Wood & Co., coffee was entered along with mustard, honey, essence of spruce, orange chips, ginger, pimento, caraway seeds, salad oil, chocolate, currants, molasses, black pepper, raisins, rice, crashed sugar, and loaf sugar.⁵¹ This grouping is almost identical to that found in the **YF 1843 Indent** and to that found in the **YF 1844 Indent**. These groupings would necessarily vary slightly from year to year because some items, such as condiments, were not requisitioned every year. Conversely, extra supplies were requisitioned in the years when it was planned to send two ships instead of one.

All supplies received from England were similarly entered in the **YF Invoice of Shipment**. They formed the basis for the information found in the record of the **Northern Department Importation for 1844**.

Northern Department Importation 1844⁵²

The **1844 Northern Department Importation** is a record of the items imported from England on the **YF 1843 Indent**. They are listed once again under the categories for General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, and Medicines. The imported amount of each item is recorded, with the unit and total cost.

This record does not have a separate category for Whole Pieces. The amounts received in Whole Pieces were added to the supplies listed under General Manufactured Goods or under Provisions as they were in the **YF Scheme Indent** and in the **YF Indent**.

Occasionally, the amounts received in the importation varied slightly from the amounts requisitioned, but generally speaking, the 1844 imports were the amounts which had been requisitioned on the 1843 Indent.⁵³

Example: As the **1844 Invoice of Shipment** indicated, the **1844 Northern Department Importation** shows that 359 pounds of coffee were imported at a cost of 44 shillings per hundredweight for a total cost of £7/1/1.⁵⁴ As noted previously, this was

50 This discrepancy could have been due to a number of reasons: the cost information available at York Factory was a year old when it was used in the **YF 1843 Indent**, and two years old by the time of the 1844 importation. England could have been in a slight inflationary period in 1844, for £320 represents an increase of 3.3 per cent over the cost of the items in 1842. In addition, some items were supplied slightly in excess of the amount requisitioned in the indent which would account for some of the increase. Both factors were present in the example of coffee: the cost per hundredweight had increased 2 shillings (a 5 per cent increase over the cost in 1842), and an additional 23 pounds had been sent. Then, too, as Barclay pointed out, errors were possible.

51 HBCA, B.239/ee/103, fo. 92d-93d.

52 HBCA, B.239/ee/116, fos. 103-120.

53 In the case of the extra large round white beads, 476 pounds were sent; 400 pounds had been requisitioned. Whether or not they were put aboard last so they could be taken off first is not known.

54 HBCA, B.239/ee/116, fo. 116.

23 pounds more than the requisitioned amount of 336 pounds. This record shows that each pound cost 4.5 pence, but this was a slight error: the cost of one hundredweight of coffee had risen from 42 shillings, as stated in the **YF 1843 Indent**, to 44 shillings, making the cost per pound 4.7 pence.

The strenuous physical activity at York Factory occasioned by the arrival of *The Prince Rupert* in August 1844 can be easily imagined. It must be appreciated, however, that the clerical activity would have been equally intense. The quantity and cost of new supplies had to be checked against the quantity and cost listed in the **YF 1844 Invoice of Shipment**. This, in turn, had to be checked against the **YF 1843 Indent**. Finally, this record — the **Northern Department Importation 1844** — had to be completed.

It was used with the **YF Inventory 1844** and the imports received from the 1843 indents for Canada Goods and Country Provisions to balance supply records of the depots for Outfit 1844.

YF Store Balance Book 1844-1845⁵⁵

The **YF Store Balance Book** balances the stock of supplies held in the Northern Department depots with the distribution of supplies for each Outfit. The stock held in inventory as of 1 June 1844 was added to the stock received in the 1844 importations and balanced with the amount of supplies distributed for Outfit 1844 and the stock held in inventory as of 1 June 1845.

This record reveals the actual distribution of supplies. It differentiates between supplies distributed from York Factory and those remaining for the use of York Factory. The former are indicated by district, the latter by location within York Factory. For example, the distribution of Congou tea at York Factory for Outfit 1844 was: 10 pounds to the YF Trading Room, 50 to the YF Provision Room, 58 to the YF Officers Shop, and 1455 to the General Shop, for a total of 1573 pounds.

All the usual categories are present in this record: General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, Medicines, Country Produce, and Whole Pieces. The amounts distributed in Whole Pieces are converted to the standard weight of measure (usually pounds or gallons) under a special heading provided for this purpose: "Contents Whole Pieces." To illustrate how this worked, consider the example of Congou tea once again: a total of four Whole Pieces (chests) were distributed to Athabasca for Outfit 1844. Each of the four chests contained an average of 81.25 pounds.⁵⁶ Accordingly, 325 pounds of tea are entered under Contents, Whole Pieces. Thus, this record reports the number of Whole Pieces which were distributed as well as the amounts that the distributed Whole Pieces

55 HBCA, B.239/t/16.

56 HBCA, B.239/d/651, fo. 9d, Whole Pieces for Outfit 1843.

represented. The “Contents Whole Pieces” column reveals that the four Whole Pieces of Congou tea, which were received at Athabasca for Outfit 1844, represented 325 pounds.⁵⁷

In order to capture any possible data on the receipt of supplies, the **YF Store Balance Book** provides a heading for stock received from ships. Here was entered any item of supply received at York Factory from the ship’s captain, which was an addition to the supplies listed in the invoices of shipment. Conversely, in order to capture any possible data on the distribution of supplies, a heading is provided for “Deficiencies on London Invoices.” If London did not send what was indicated on the invoices of shipment, it was entered here. All “Samples to England” were also entered into the distribution record. Thus, every means was utilized to balance the entire importation of supplies into the Northern Department with the distribution of supplies.

Under “stock held” is a column for “YF Made Up Works.” Supplies that were manufactured or “made up” at YF, for example, boats, purges, and vomits, were entered here. Whole Pieces were also entered in this column; four Whole Pieces of Congou tea, in addition to the four sent to Athabasca, were made up for Outfit 1844, presumably into “Pieces” suitable for distribution.

The terms “Pieces” and “Whole Pieces” appear to be used in two different ways, indicating that the two are not always synonymous. The term “Whole Pieces” is used in reference to supplies received from England in distinguishable containers (bags, cans, chests, kegs and so forth). The term “Pieces” is normally used in reference to supply packages transported from York Factory or Norway House to the districts. For example, no district received a Whole Piece (i.e., a chest) of tea in 1843, but every district received some tea. This indicates that tea was repackaged and combined with other supplies into a piece of transportable weight which was usually around ninety pounds.⁵⁸

The information on stock contained in the **YF Store Balance Book 1844-1845** was based on the **YF Inventories of 1844 and 1845** and the **1844 Importations**.⁵⁹ The information contained on distribution was based on the **YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844**.⁶⁰ However, the distribution in the **YF Store Balance Book** is recorded in greater detail and reveals the actual practice.

Example. The depots held a total of 606 pounds of coffee on 1 June 1844. The importation from England added another 359 pounds for a total of 965 pounds of coffee.

57 The weights or measures contained in Whole Pieces varied from year to year. The **Invoice of Shipment** provided the details regarding the weights or measures of items imported from England in Whole Pieces. These were entered in the **YF Whole Pieces Book** for each Outfit. The **YF Whole Pieces Book** for Outfit 1843 records that a chest of Congou tea weighed 81.25 pounds. (HBCA, B.239/d/651, fo. 9d) The **Whole Pieces Book** for Outfit 1844 records that a chest of Congou tea weighed 83 pounds. (HBCA, B.239/d/668, fo. 9d) One might assume that the figures used in converting the Whole Pieces distributed for Outfit 1844 would be those from the Whole Pieces Book for Outfit 1844. However, it is the year of receipt of the item which is the determining factor. In the case of Congou Tea, the weight was derived from the **Whole Pieces Book** for Outfit 1843. The four chests, which were distributed for Outfit 1844, had been received in 1843 and, indeed, weighed an average of 81.25 pounds each.

58 Whole Pieces can also be listed in some records as “Pieces.” In a record entitled “Abstract of Pieces composing Northern Department Outfit 1839,” all the “Pieces” are Whole Pieces, i.e., supplies received in distinguishable containers (HBCA, B.239/z/24, fo. 365).

59 HBCA, B.239/aa/77, **YF Inventory 1844**; HBCA, B.239/ee/116, fols. 103-120, **Northern Department Importation 1844**.

60 HBCA, B.239/r/15, **YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844**.

The **YF Scheme Distribution 1843-1844** indicates that 60 pounds of coffee were reserved for Athabasca Outfit 1844 and 40 pounds for McKenzie River for Outfit 1844. The **YF Store Balance Book 1844-1845** documents that indeed 60 pounds were distributed to Athabasca and 40 to McKenzie River for Outfit 1844. In addition, 15 pounds were removed from Contingencies and distributed to the Red River clergy, and a total of 270 pounds were distributed to the York Factory Shops (90 to the Officers Shop and 180 to the General Shop), making a total distribution of 385 pounds. The total distribution and the total inventory as of 1 June 1845 (385 plus 576 pounds) accounted for 961 pounds. The balance of coffee was deficient by four pounds.

Clearly, distribution of supplies is equivalent to expenditure of supplies; the total distribution of each item contained in this record matches the amount which was entered into the **YF Expenditure Book for Outfit 1844**.

*YF Expenditure Book for Outfits 1840-1860*⁶¹

The **YF Expenditure Books** indicate the quantity of supplies distributed to each district of the Northern Department. This appears to have been an annual record, but the **YF Expenditure Book** for 1844 is not in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. **YF Expenditure Books** for Outfits, which have survived, reveal a format similar to that of the **YF Balance Books**. In fact, the similarity is so great that one wonders why this record was kept, for the same distribution information is recorded in both records.⁶² It is fortunate, however, that this information was duplicated because both records are not always available for a given year.

The **YF Expenditure Book for Outfits 1840-1860**, on the other hand, is a yearly compilation of the distribution of supplies for the Northern Department. This particular record could have been compiled in 1862 or later from the information contained in the annual **YF Expenditure Books**. It is valuable in that it gives a quick survey of the kinds and amounts of supplies distributed throughout the Northern Department over a twenty-one year span. It does not, however, give the distribution by district. To know what was distributed to a particular district, one must consult either the **YF Balance Book** or an annual **YF Expenditure Book**.

The usual categories are present in this record: General Manufactured Goods, Provisions, Stationery, Medicines, Country Produce, Whole Pieces. The measures or weights of Whole Pieces are added to General Manufactured Goods or to Provisions.

Example. The **YF Expenditure Book for Outfits 1840-1860** records that 385 pounds of coffee were distributed throughout the Northern Department for Outfit 1844.⁶³

Summary

The requisition and distribution cycle for 1843-1845 is summarized in Figure 1. The requisition and distribution of coffee during this period is summarized in Figure 2.

61 HBCA, B.239/p/16.

62 Compare, for example, **YF Expenditure Book for Outfit 1840** (HBCA, B.239/p/13) with the **YF Store Balance Book for Outfit 1840** (HBCA, B.239/t/12).

63 HBCA, B.239/p/16, fo. 38d.

From the foregoing analysis, the following time schedule can be proposed for the completion of the major requisition and distribution records at York Factory:

Spring 1843

- YF Inventory as of 1 June 1843.
- YF Scheme Distribution for Outfit 1843 and reserves for Outfit 1844.
- YF Store Balance Book for Outfit 1841.
- YF Expenditure Book for Outfit 1841.
- YF Scheme Indent for Outfit 1845.
- YF Importation of Canada Goods for Outfit 1843.
- YF Importation of Country Produce for Outfit 1843.

Summer 1843

- YF Indent for England for Outfit 1845.
- YF Indent for Canada for Outfit 1844.
- YF Importation from England for Outfit 1844.

Winter 1843

- YF Indent for Country Produce for Outfit 1844.
- YF Country Produce requisition for Outfit 1845.

Spring 1844

- YF Inventory as of 1 June 1844.
- YF Scheme Distribution for Outfit 1844 and reserves for Outfit 1845.
- YF Store Balance Book for Outfit 1842.
- YF Expenditure Book for Outfit 1842.
- YF Scheme Indent for Outfit 1846.
- YF Importation of Canada Goods for Outfit 1844.
- YF Importation of Country Produce for Outfit 1844.

Summer 1844

- YF Indent for England for Outfit 1846.
- YF Indent for Canada for Outfit 1845.
- YF Importation from England for Outfit 1845.

Winter 1844

- YF Indent for Country Produce for Outfit 1845.
- YF Country Produce requisition for Outfit 1846.

Spring 1845

- YF Inventory as of 1 June 1845.
- YF Scheme Distribution for Outfit 1845 and reserves for Outfit 1846.
- YF Store Balance Book for Outfit 1843.
- YF Expenditure Book for Outfit 1843.
- YF Scheme Indent for Outfit 1847.
- YF Importation of Canada Goods for Outfit 1845.
- YF Importation of Country Produce for Outfit 1845.

Summer 1845

- YF Indent for England for Outfit 1847.
- YF Indent for Canada for Outfit 1846.
- YF Importation from England for Outfit 1846.

Winter 1845

YF Indent for Country Produce for Outfit 1846.

YF Country Produce requisition for Outfit 1847.

It is possible that the **YF Inventory** could have been an exercise on paper rather than an actual counting of supplies: that the inventory was assumed from the requisition and distribution supply records. If so, this would solve the time problem encountered in the preparation of the **YF Inventory**, the **YF Scheme Distribution**, and the **YF Scheme Indent** in time for the June meeting of the council, which was normally held at Red River or at Norway House. For instance, it would have been impossible to complete these records after 1 June 1843 and have the **YF Scheme Indent**, or a "sketch" of it, delivered to the members of the Council of the Northern Department at Red River Settlement by 10 June 1843. However, if it was merely a transfer of information from one record to another, these particular records could have been completed much earlier, well in time to be part of the 1 April packet.

However, this theory is refuted by the evidence found in the **Store Balance Book**. The inventory and distribution of all items did not balance at the end of the Outfit; most did, but a significant number did not. (Note the example of coffee.) This indicates that an actual inventory was taken, but the **YF Inventory** could have been taken before 1 June. Their "usual period of closing the Spring trade" could have been much earlier. In fact, it would have been possible to take the inventory as soon as an Outfit's distribution had been completed or at least identified and separated from the remainder of the inventory. If this were the case the problem with the time schedule would be solved.

There is another possibility to consider: a combination of the above events could have taken place. An actual inventory could have been taken at York Factory prior to 1 April, but the inventories of the stock held in the depots at Norway House, Oxford House, and Red River, which were mainly in Whole Pieces, could have been assumed from the previous year's records. This would solve the time problem and also account for the fact that the only 1843 depot inventory found in the records was for Red River, and that the data in this inventory is inconsistent with the data entered in the **YF Inventory 1843**. (See footnote number 11.)

The Whole Pieces category is found only in the records which deal with inventory or distribution. It was not used in the records dealing with the requisition and importation of supplies. This category emerges as a local means to control the inventory and distribution of supplies received in distinguishable containers.

The fact that the Hudson's Bay Company did not consider unconsumed or unused distributed supplies in determining the need for new supplies most likely resulted in stocks of unused, unwanted supplies in districts other than York Factory. However, considering the difficulties in communication and transportation, the system worked remarkably well.

Figure 1
The Requisition & Distribution Cycle, 1843-1845

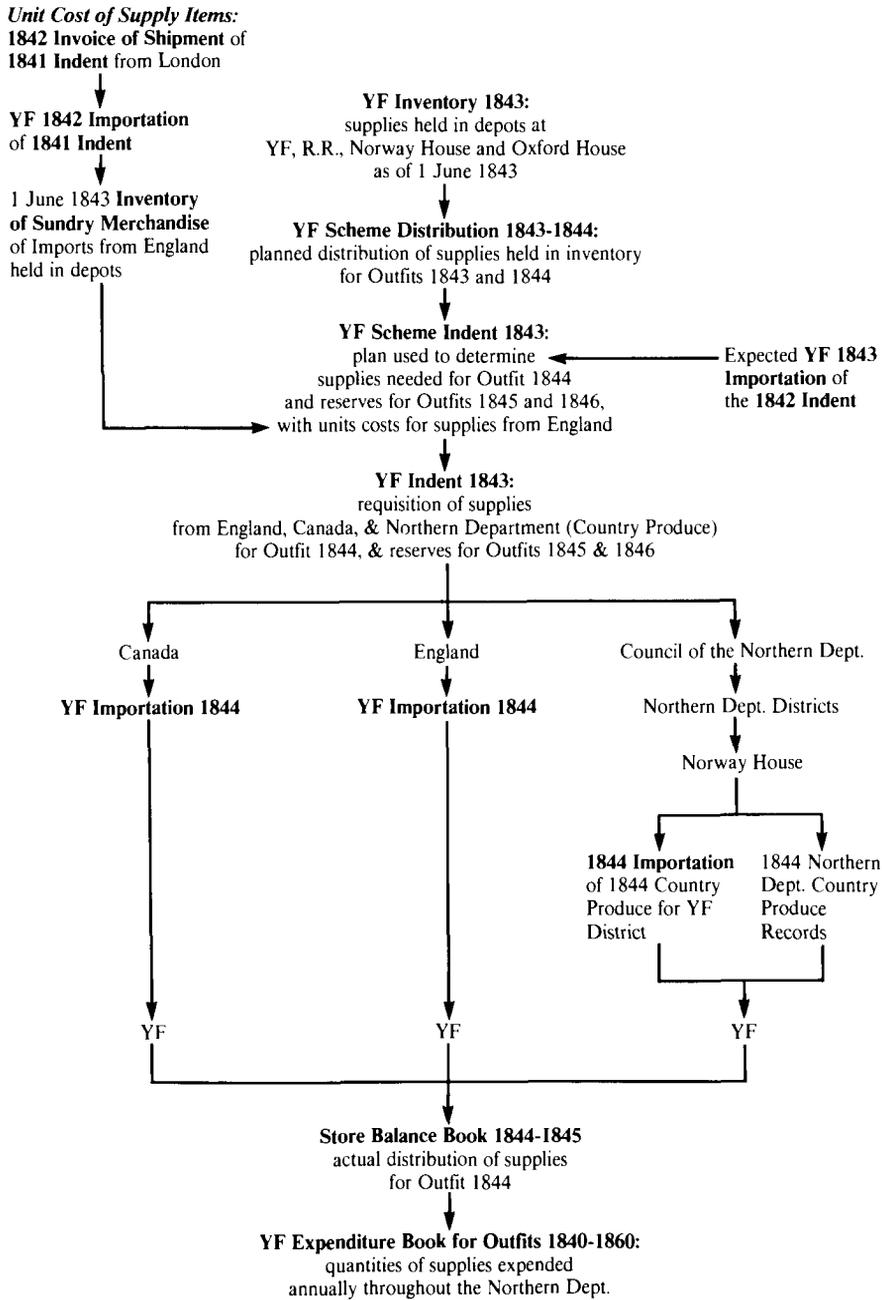


Figure 2 Requisition and Distribution of Coffee, 1843-1845 Cycle

