Osnaburgh House:
A Microcosm of Canadian History

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Seemingly minor issues and events occurring in remote places are seldom studied in Canadian history. This is unfortunate. The history of Osnaburgh House represents a microcosm of some of the important themes in Canada's past. In order to appreciate the evolution of Canada's story more fully it becomes necessary to develop an understanding of how, what might be viewed as trivial players in far away and isolated locations have contributed to Canada's story. An in-depth analysis of places such as Osnaburgh House, which are, for the most part, unknown to even the educated historian, reveals vibrant histories that illustrate the greater Canadian picture. For almost half a century, an intense competition existed between the Hudson's Bay Company and fur traders from Montreal. Osnaburgh House was created in the context of this rivalry and was a decisive factor in the HBC's strategy to defeat the Northwest Company. Another element of the HBC's strategy was to adapt the way in which they transported their goods. Indeed, the HBC, and later entities such as the Patricia Transportation Company, transformed transportation in the Canadian north; first with the York Boat, and later with the use of steam power. From its establishment in 1786, to its closing in 1963, Osnaburgh House was an accurate representation of how the system of transportation in northern Canada continually evolved. The same can be said of the relationship that existed between the aboriginals, in this case the Mishkeegogamang First Nations, and the HBC trading posts. Religious and government entities, to help them gain access to Native populations, exploited the economic and social reality of the fur trade that had created a dependency of Native peoples on the HBC post. The fur trade rivalry, technology and its impact on transportation, and the changing relationship between the aboriginals and the HBC trading posts are all important parts of the broad panorama of Canadian history. A study

of Osnaburgh House, over the last 250 years, helps one to develop an understanding of how Canada has evolved and is, also, representative of Canada's story as a whole.

The Fur Trade Rivalry: A Trading Post 'Forged in Fire'[1]

For almost two decades, from 1804-1821, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the Northwest Company (NWC) battled for control of the Canadian Fur Trade. Osnaburgh House was situated in the heart of this Fur Trade rivalry.[2] The establishment of Osnaburgh House in 1786 occurred under the pretext of a "Canadien" invasion.[3] Although not originally intended to be a permanent post, the strategic benefits of its location made it a valuable asset in the Hudson's Bay Company's battle to establish a monopoly in the fur trade in North America. This became especially important after the Northwest Company began to buy out other fur trade companies, thereby creating a more organized, efficient, and powerful enemy than the scores of traders from Montreal who had been operating, more or less independently, in the area in preceding decades. The two companies, the HBC and the NWC, fought an economic, and sometimes physical, war for control of the fur trade until 1821 when they merged. This event marked the end of the fur trade rivalry. However, competition was not foreign to the post. Two conclusions can be made about fur trade rivalry that came to exist at Osnaburgh. Firstly, a great deal of competition existed in the Little North and surrounding regions in the decades and years that preceded the consolidation of the NWC (Appendix 1.i).[4] Secondly, Osnaburgh House was established by the HBC to combat the 'poaching' by fur traders from Montreal: first the independent Pedlars, and then, the Northwest Company.

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[1] Paraphrased from, J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War* (Toronto: Lester & Opren Dennys, 1989).

[2] Osnaburgh House gets its name in honour of Osnaburg or Osnabruch, a province in Hanover, Prussia, which, from 1714-1837, was a British possession. King George I (1714-1727) died at Osnaburg on June 11, 1727.

[3] Term often used to describe fur traders from Montreal who not associated with the HBC.

[4] The French fur traders called this region *Le Petit Nord* to distinguish it from *Le Grand Nord* that referred to the area north and west of Lake Winnipeg.

Competition, to some extent, had always existed in the northern fur trade. The period between 1670 (the incorporation of the HBC) and 1713 (the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht) bore witness to intense fighting and confrontation. The belligerents were the English, that is the HBC, and the French, who had expanded the dimensions of their fur trade and imperial ambitions north towards Hudson Bay.[5] During this era a series of military engagements occurred between the English and French in which HBC posts on the perimeter of Hudson Bay were captured, returned and recaptured.[6] Although these conflicts were set in the context of the fur trade, broader issues, such as political differences and colonial supremacy, were the real reason for the competition that existed between the English and the French in North America. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which gave all of Hudson Bay to the English, prohibited the French fur traders from conducting trade on the Bay and its tributaries.[7] However, the French, to the dismay and then anger of the English and the HBC, did not abandon their involvement in the Canadian fur trade. It was only a matter of a few years before French traders were able to reorganize and launch expeditions in an attempt to reestablish their presence in the area. As early as 1717, traders from New France developed new trade routes and trading posts along and past the Great Lakes route, the most significant of which were the posts established on Lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake), Lake of the Woods, and Lake Superior near present day Thunder Bay.[8] These posts gave the French traders access to the Little North and other far-reaching parts of Rupert's Land. HBC posts on the Bay felt the effects of

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[5] Victor P. Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North: Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Center, 1986), 4-5.
[6] Ibid, 4-5.
[7] Arthur J. Ray, "Competition and Conservation in the Early Subartic Fur Trade," in *Ethnohistory* 25, (1978): 347. Online via JSTOR. <www.jstor.org> (28 January 2007).
[8] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 5.

the new posts established by the traders from New France.[9] France's presence peaked during the 1750s, shortly before the British conquered New France in 1763.[10]

After the fall of New France, opportunities arose for new, independent trade ventures. French merchants involved in the fur trade before the fall of New France, and, to a much larger extent, British entrepreneurs who had recently arrived in Montreal, provided the capital that funded the new traders' efforts to tap into the northern Canadian fur trade market.[11] These ventures produced a wave of traders, who, with their base in Montreal, used the Great Lakes route way to launch an invasion into the Little North. The Little North was valuable for more than just furs that were harvested there; the region was the gateway to lands that lay west and north of Lake Winnipeg. Commonly referred to as 'Pedlars' by employees of the HBC, the traders from Montreal began to dominate the fur trade of the Little North and threatened the HBC's hegemony over the area.[12] Initially the traders worked alone or as part of loosely arranged partnerships.[13] However, more organized companies eventually formed. The newly formed companies constituted a formidable opposition to the Company forcing the HBC to expand its infrastructure in the Little North. The establishment of Osnaburgh House was a direct result of this economic threat.

By last quarter of the 18th century, the emergence of Pedlars from Montreal caused the HBC to take a greater interest in the lands that lay to the south and west of Hudson Bay; an area that, due to the battles over the fur trade, was appropriately referred

[9] Ibid, 7.
[10] Ibid, 8.
[11] Ibid, 9.
[12] Ibid, 9.
[13] Ibid, 9.

to as the "fire country."[14] This resulted in a significant expansion in the number and location of HBC posts. Osnaburgh House was one such post. In his comprehensive study, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company: 1670*-1870, historian E.E. Rich argues, "Osnaburgh…was symptomatic of the reaction of the Hudson's Bay Company to the outward thrust of the North West Company."[15] Independent traders caught the attention of HBC officials as well. An examination of the development of the fur trade competition, first between the HBC and independent or loosely organized Pedlars, and later between the HBC and the NWC will demonstrate the importance of Osnaburgh House in the HBC's attempt to establish its control of the fur trade in the Little North.

As early as 1783 correspondence began between Edward Jarvis, factor at Fort Albany and Chief Factor of the Albany District, and HBC headquarters in London that explored the possibility of erecting a post near Lake Pascocoggan, a direct tributary of Lake St. Joseph. It was an area that experienced heavy Pedlar activity. In 1782, when Jarvis replaced Thomas Hutchins as chief factor at Albany, plans were put in place to expand the role of Fort Albany in the fur trade and to expand the HBC's influence along the Albany River drainage.[16] The Governor & Commissioner (Gov. & Com.) wrote to Jarvis in the spring of 1783 stating "We find the establishment at Gloucester House has proved beneficial by enlarging Our Trade, and We hope that another settlement still further Inland would…considerably extend it."[17] Rumors and reports of the furs that were escaping the hands of the HBC on and around Lake St. Joseph had made their way to London. In Jarvis's response he confirmed the rumors that Canadiens were conducting

[14] E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company: 1670-1870, Vol. II: 1763-1870* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 123.
[15] Ibid, 125.
[16] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 45.
[17] Gov. & Com. to E. Jarvis, May 21, 1783. HBCA A.5/2 fo. 93

trade in the area. The success of the Pedlars, and, therefore, their impact on the HBC's profits, was staggering. In 1783, Jarvis reported that during the previous seasons "Ezekiel Solomon…carried 4000 Beaver away. [This] was the product of three, four, five, or sometimes six huts dispersed over the country in the winter and collected in the spring."[18] In the 1783-84 season, Gloucester House, the closest HBC post to the area where Solomon was trading, collected only 2,522 male beaver.[19]

Independent traders such as Solomon had already come to the attention of HBC officials. In fact, as early as the late 1760s, news of Pedlar activity in the Little North became increasingly frequent and, therefore, troublesome, at Albany House.[20] During the 1770s, Ezekiel Solomon had enjoyed almost total control over the fur trade in the Little North.[21] The effects of Solomon's trade became evident in 1776 when, according the Victor P. Lytwyn, "declining fur returns and the injurious effects of Solomon's trading made it essential for Fort Albany to supplement its tidewater trade."[22] Solomon's success was directly related to the methods he employed in procuring furs. He established a series of "impermanent trading shacks" scattered across the major navigation systems of the Little North.[23] In fact, Solomon's enterprise was larger than the HBC originally anticipated. By 1780 Solomon operated at least seventeen outposts in the Little North.[24] Solomon and the Canadiens were trading for furs successfully with the aboriginals not only because of the superiority of their trading goods, mainly their

[18] E. Jarvis to Gov. & Com., September 28, 1783. HBCA A.11/44 fo. 208.
[19] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 174
[20] Ibid, 28.
[21] Ibid, 9.
[22] Ibid, 28.
[23] Rich, 125. The practice of building semi-permanent posts was later adopted by the Northwest Company. The remnants of such posts are can still be seen today on the shore of Lake St. Joseph.
[24] Victor Lytwyn, "The Anishinabeg and The Fur Trade," in *Lake Superior to Rainy Lake: Three Centuries of Fur Trade History*, ed., Jean Morrison (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 2003), 29.

Caribbean Rum and Brazilian tobacco, but also because of their geographical advantage.[25] Duncan Cameron, a Canadien trader and later an employee of the NWC, reported that he received little resistance in the Nipigon District. He was able to "run his canoes unchallenged from Lake Nipigon to Lake Winnipeg by the way of Lac Seul."[26] His route undoubtedly crossed over Lake St. Joseph, were Osnaburgh House would later be built.

John Kipling, Factor at Gloucester House, also wrote to London expressing his concern over the unchecked Solomon. He felt that the HBC had to extend its presence into the area around Lake St. Joseph. Kipling suggested that the HBC "send a few men to [Pascocoggan] with some spirituous Liquors and other essential articles."[27] He, too, mentioned the success of Ezekiel Solomon on Lake St. Joseph. Indeed, liquor and tobacco were often used as leverage in order to gain trading loyalties with the Natives. In a later letter, Kipling further expressed his concerns. He wrote:

> Ezekiel Solomon came late last fall with three large canoes and twenty eight men and from thence dispatched eight men and a Trader in a large canoe up river to build a House to intercept the Indians coming to Gloucester.[28]

Solomon had superior knowledge of the region's geography. His post on Pascocoggan was strategically located in such a place that he was able to monitor any push inland from Gloucester House on the Albany River as well as to entice Natives traveling north to Gloucester House to trade with him instead (Appendix 1.ii).[29] Kipling's correspondence confirmed what Jarvis had expressed earlier. Not only were there competing traders in

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[25] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 61. HBC employees in the Little North often commented on the superiority of the Canadien's and the NWC's rum and tobacco; two extremely important trade goods.
[26] Publication of Hudson's Bay Record Society XXX: Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870, 97.
[27] John Kipling to Gov. and Com., September 28, 1783. HBCA A.11/44 fo 192.
[28] John Kipling to Gov. and Com., September 11, 1784. HBCA A.11/44 fo 144d.
[29] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 42.

the area, they were successfully undermining the HBC. The correspondence between the HBC Factors in North America and HBC headquarters in London eventually lead to the settlement of Lake St. Joseph by the HBC. Although the smallpox epidemic of 1782-83 marked the end of Ezekiel Solomon's dominance of the fur trade in the Little North, it by no means meant his business was handed over to the HBC.[30] Other Pedlars, and more importantly, the newly formed Northwest Company moved into the Little North to pick up where Solomon had left off. It became apparent to the HBC that if it wished to compete for the thousands of furs that were available in and around Lake St. Joseph, and to restrict any further advances made by the Canadien traders past the Little North, they needed to establish a post in the area.

The news of Solomon's demise quickly spread throughout the Little North, to Albany House, and eventually all the way to England. The Gov. & Com. wrote to Edward Jarvis in the spring of 1784 stating

> We should suppose you will be able next summer to settle at one of the…Lakes and to reap every advantage from the…absence of Ezekiel Solomon so that the Company's Servants may establish themselves in those parts.[31]

However, before the HBC made a full commitment to a post on Lake St. Joseph, it commissioned a scouting mission lead by James Sutherland, a man who was a key player in the expansion of the HBC and who would later become a Factor at Osnaburgh.[32] George Sutherland undertook a preliminary expedition through the region in 1777 but more detailed surveys were needed in order to successfully launch a rival

[30] Lytwyn, "The Anishinabeg," 30.
[31] Gov. & Com to E. Jarvis, May 19, 1784. HBCA A.5/2, fo. 108.
[32]Lytwyn, "The Little North," 46.

trading post (Appendix 1.iii).[33] On May 20, 1984, James Sutherland left Gloucester House with the task of exploring possible trade routes and locations for a post on Pascocoggan or Lake St. Joseph.[34] It took him about a week to reach the head of Lake St. Joseph, which he called Miskiggogamy Lake, one of the largest lakes he had seen in his experience while working for the HBC.[35] Furthermore, he reported that travel on the lake was relatively easy. He argued, "Should the Company get a House settled on or near Pascocoggan it would be no difficult task to settle from thence on this lake as there is only 7 carrying places in the way and most of them short."[36] Sutherland's report on his expedition was undoubtedly crucial in the Company's decision to establish a post in the area. As part of the Albany water system, Lake St. Joseph had a direct water link to James Bay. The relatively easy navigation to and from Gloucester House would have been a key factor in both the establishment and success of the post. More importantly, Sutherland's explorations in the summer of 1784 gave HBC officials a better understanding of the region's geography. Just as Ezekiel Solomon had chosen Pascocoggan as a strategic post where he was able to intercept HBC traders traveling up and down the Albany River, Sutherland explained that Lake St. Joseph was an important 'choke' point where Pedlars who entered the Little North with hopes of moving west and north had to pass.[37] Lake St. Joseph was therefore selected as the site for the new HBC post. Due to the fact that the HBC and NWC traveled on common water routes, a post on Lake St. Joseph could, and eventually would, serve as a depot for the further expansion of

[33] Ibid, 30.
[34] Ibid, 46.
[35] Journal from Gloucester House to Lake Saul, 1786. HBCA B.78/a/14.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 47.

the HBC. As a result, Lake St. Joseph became extremely important to the HBC for both strategic and economic reasons.

In late summer of 1785, John Best set out from Albany with eight men with the purpose of establishing a post on Lake St. Joseph.[38] However, the party was stopped short of their final destination and they subsequently wintered on Miminiska Lake.[39] The following spring Best continued to Lake St. Joseph where, because of his superior carpentry skills, he was able to build his post with speed and precision.[40] Officially established in 1786, the post was built "on a low sandy point projecting from the North side of the Lake."[41] It was strategically situated only a few miles south-west of the Canadiens route to Lake Nipigon commonly referred to as the "Pedlar's Path".[42] This area of the lake is still referred to as the 'Pedlar's Path' by anglers who visit the Old Post and Village today. Osnaburgh House was one of the scores of posts that were established during the end of the 18th and beginning of 19th centuries. The inland posts were placed strategically along major arteries. Furthermore, the establishment of Osnaburgh House, and other subsequent posts in the Little North, was a direct attack on the Pedlars' and the NWC's greatest weakness, its long supply route.[43] The HBC's trade goods could be shipped more frequently, in larger quantities and with greater quality from Hudson Bay than the Canadiens' goods, which had to be shipped by canoe all the way from Montreal. The network of trading posts established by the HBC, of which Osnaburgh House

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[38] Ibid, 50.
[39] Ibid, 50.
[40] Ibid, 54.
[41] Osnaburgh Post Journal, 1813-14. HBCA B.155/e/1.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Theodore Catton, "The Rainy Lake Region in the Fur Trade," in *Lake Superior to Rainy Lake: Three Centuries of Fur Trade History*, ed., Jean Morrison (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 2003), 49.

became a vital link, was a crucial factor that eventually lead to HBC's monopoly over the fur trade after 1821.

Ironically, the post was never originally intended to be permanent one. It was meant to be a temporary establishment with two main purposes. Firstly, it had to combat the Canadiens that had entered the region and, secondly, it was to serve as a jumping-off point from which the HBC could facilitate further penetration of the Little North.[44] The latter purpose coincided with Jarvis' plan to continue the HBC's push from the Albany River to Lake Nipigon, and, eventually to Lake Superior.[45] In a letter sent from HBC headquarters in London to Factor Jarvis at Fort Albany, the Gov. & Com. reported that although they were "pleased at [the] establishment" they did "did not wish any permanent building to be erected there as yet," but rather "a temporary House be run up (in the manner of the Canadiens) until such time as its importance is evident or a more eligible spot is found."[46] Despite the tentative nature of its early history, Osnaburgh House, because of its geographic location, became invaluable to the HBC's expansion in the area. Since it was near the Canadiens' route and also at the head of the lake, it was easy for the HBC to monitor other traders from this post. This advantage became increasingly important as competition grew more intense. By the latter half of the 1780s, the Northwest Company, which had been formed in 1782, began to spread its routes into the Little North.[47] The new company quickly gained a foothold, and as a result, the HBC recognized the importance of Osnaburgh House. The Gov. & Com. recommended, "it ought to be rebuilt and enlarged unless a better situation could be found with in [sic] 5 or

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[44] Ibid, 125.
[45] Ibid, 178-79.
[46] Gov. & Com. to Edward Jarvis, May 16, 1787. HBCA A.5/2 fos. 108.
[47] Charles, A. Bishop, *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade: An Historical and Ecological Study* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1974), 109.

6 miles of it."[48] Although the specific location mattered little to the HBC, it became ever more obvious to the Company that some sort of permanent post needed to be established in the area if they hoped to compete with the Canadiens from Montreal. During the three and a half decades that followed the creation of Osnaburgh House, the post bore witness to some of the most intense competition and fighting experienced by the HBC during the years of the fur trade rivalry.

There was definitely no love lost among the competing traders on Lake St. Joseph. The Osnaburgh House Post Journal for 1794-5 gave several accounts of the nature of the competition that existed between the HBC and NWC. On June 24, 1794, Factor John Sutherland complained about Canadiens who "in the evening…came within 12 yd [sic] of our house and marked a spot of ground with [the] intention of building a house upon it."[49] A week later, Sutherland reported that a race had ensued between the Canadiens and two HBC employees to trade for sturgeon from Natives who had come to the post from the north.[50] This type of petty competition continued throughout the summer. When winter came, the rivalry grew more intense. On January 24, 1795 Sutherland reported "two of the Canadiens applied to me for work…but this I declined as Provisions is [sic] precious at this place…they are starving and starve they shall before I assist them on account of their bad behavior last summer."[51] Sutherland's reports illustrated how agents of both the HBC and NWC competed in close proximity to each other as well as the animosity that the HBC employees or, at least, Sutherland, held towards the employees of the NWC. Despite the fact that these two companies operated

[48] Gov. & Com. to John McNab, May 30, 1793.
[49] Osnaburgh Post Journal, 1794-95. B.155/a/10.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

almost side by side, the competition never reached the level of violence that was experienced in later years.

As the fur trade rivalry intensified, it became clear that Osnaburgh House had become more important because of its geographically strategic location than its ability to bring in large quantities of fur. For NWC traders looking to head towards Lake Winnipeg, Lake St. Joseph was the gateway to the west.[52] Therefore, if the HBC was able to maintain control of the region, it could control a major route used by NWC.[53] The stakes were high. A monopoly over the Fur Trade was the goal that the agents of both HBC and NWC were actively working towards. The two decades that opened the 19th century witnessed an even more intense level of competition between Canadien traders and the HBC. By 1804, the XY Company and the Northwest Company merged, thereby creating a more formidable and organized opposition to the HBC.[54] In her article *The Causes of the North American Fur Trade Rivalry: 1804-1810*, Ann Carlos argued that the early years of competition between the NWC and HBC were relatively "passive."[55] A more "predatory" competition, initiated by the HBC, emerged after 1809 due to the Napoleonic Continental System in Europe that caused in a decline in fur prices.[56] The experience of the HBC on Lake St. Joseph during the nearly two decades of competition with the NWC supports Carlos' thesis. By 1809, confrontations, sometimes violent, became a more regular occurrence between the two companies. However, it is unclear to what degree the violence that broke out on Eagle Lake, an Osnaburgh House

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[52] Glyndwr Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 97.
[53] Ibid, 97.
[54] Ann Carlos, "The Causes and Origins of the North American Fur Trade Rivalry: 1804-1810," *The Journal of Economic History*, 4, 1981, 777.
[55] Ibid, 777.
[56] Ibid, 777.

outpost, was a result of the Gov. and Com.'s order for HBC employees to become more aggressive in their trade policy, or result of a rivalry that had been fermenting for decades.

The HBC Post on Eagle Lake experienced intense competition and violence. In the late summer of 1809, William Corrigal was sent to Eagle Lake from Osnaburgh to re-establish an abandoned post on the lake (Appendix 1.iv).[57] Within a week of his arrival, Corrigal recorded in his journal his concern about the "number of Canadiens coming from Lake la Plui and Lac Seul to winter at this place."[58] It wasn't long before the two adversaries began to clash. On September 16, 1809, a bloody battle played out on the shores of Eagle Lake. Fortunately, journal entries for both sides are available; William Corrigal's for the HBC and Duncan Cameron for the NWC.

It is important to understand the context in which the battle erupted before analyzing the journals of the representatives of the HBC and the NWC. On the day in question, both the HBC and the Northwesterners spotted a Native man in a canoe that was laden with furs.[59] Since the man had conducted trade with the HBC before, and had a line of credit with the company, the furs in the canoe technically already belonged to the HBC. However, this did not stop Aeneas MacDonall, a representative of the NWC, from trying to procure the furs from the man in the canoe.[60] The suspicions, resentment and rivalries between the HBC and the NWC, which had been smoldering for several seasons, were ignited by MacDonall's act. Starting with William Corrigal, the two

[57] Eagle Lake Post Journal, 1809-10. B.57/a/2.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

journal entries will be quoted in their entirety so the reader can appreciate fully the incident, and Corrigal's and Cameron's interpretations of it. Corrigal wrote,

> I desired him to give me my goods and he might make of the Indian what he pleased. He gave me no answer to that. I then ordered James Tate and John Corrigal to go and take the goods out of the canoe, as Tate was going to lay hold of the goods, MacDonall taking his sword from its sheath cut Tate in the neck and little from his throat and in the left arm. He then cut John Corrigal in the right arm till it scratched the bone a little above the elbow, at the same time one of his men came running with a large hatchet and gave John [?] a blow on his left shoulder that dislocated the joint. MacDonall was turning after some more of our men flourishing his sword, and coming up our bank made a stab at John Mowat. By this time Mowat got a pistol and in his own defense shot MacDonall on the spot. All this time was Mr. Edoymaar (?) going staggering with a pair of pistols in his hand and at one time put one of them to John Corrigal's breast and exclaiming you Damn Rascal I will blow out your brains.[61]

The intensity of the fighting is laid out clearly by Corrigal. His entries in the weeks that followed the shooting of Aeneas MacDonall reported continued tension and numerous threats. However, Duncan Cameron provided a much different account of the proceedings. In a letter he wrote to Thomas Bear, a HBC trader, on October 3, 1809, Cameron explains his version of the killing.

> The Villainous deed was committed without any other provocation on our side than that the Deceased went to Corrigal's landing place for one of his Indians that went in with Mr. Haldane form Lake St. Anne; immediately 3 armed men came and attacked the Deceased who had no other arms on him but his Hanger, with which he defended himself like a brave man….It is evident that this atrocious action was with premeditated design, as they all at once came with Arms when no one offered them the least of insult.[62]

The bias in each of the accounts is obvious. Of course, it would be impossible to determine which version reflects the actual events accurately. Nonetheless, the journals of Corrigal and Cameron serve as useful tools in understanding the nature of the competition that existed in the region surrounding Osnaburgh House. The events that

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Duncan Cameron, quoted in, Williams, 100.

lead to death of Aeneas MacDonall represent the intense rivalry that existed between the HBC and NWC in their attempts to establish control over the fur trade.

This is not to suggest that conditions at Osnaburgh House, and at its outposts, were always or consistently this intense. In 1815, Factor John Davis recorded rather friendly relations between the HBC and Charles McKenzie, the chief NWC trader in the region. He reported the NWC "were far from offering an insult or violence as heretofore they have done in this department."[63] However, reports such as Davis' are far less common than those that suggest Lake St. Joseph and the surrounding area was a main stage in the vigorous and relentless battle for control of the region's fur trade and transportation routes.

The year 1821 marked the end of the fur trade rivalry. On December 15, 1821, a Royal Proclamation made the merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company official.[64] Two main changes resulted from the demise of the NWC. Firstly, it was decided that the judicial system be revised so that the lawlessness that prevailed under the pretense of the fur trade rivalry would cease.[65] Events like the one on Eagle Lake undoubtedly lead HBC officials to seek the establishment of a judicial system. Secondly, HBC officials began to notice the negative effect the fur trade rivalry had on fur bearing populations in the region, and subsequently vowed that fur trade competition in the future had to be avoided.[66] For Osnaburgh House, the cessation of hostilities meant the post could refocus its energies towards becoming a more efficient and effective

[63] Osnaburgh Report, 1815-16. HBCA B.155/e/3.
[64] Rich, 401.
[65] Ibid, 401.
[66] Ibid, 401.

trading station. In the Osnaburgh House report from 1813-14, Factor Thomas Vincent complained about one aspect of the post. He wrote:

> The house is…badly situated for fishing, there being but few to be procured near it and it is my opinion the fishing could be better and much more conveniently conducted if the house was removed about ten miles of the lake.[67]

The trend in fishing patterns noticed by Thomas Vincent in 1813 continues to exist today as Old Post and Village guides and anglers often travel up to an hour down the lake in search of better fishing. After the merger of the HBC and the NWC, Osnaburgh House's strategic location, which had defined it existence during the years of the fiercest fur trade rivalry, lost its importance. Subsequently, the post was moved seven miles up the lake to better fishing grounds in 1821.[68] The exact location of this site is unknown. However, it was most likely located somewhere near the Third Narrows, also known as Smooth Rock Narrows, the last set of narrows before entering the main lake. Although the post was returned to its original location the following year[69], the move signifies Osnaburgh House's, and the HBC's, desire and ability to reorganize the company in the years after competition with the NWC ended.

Osnaburgh House, although not the largest or most important HBC post, is nonetheless representative of the manner in which trading posts were conceived and built. The intense rivalries for the enormous profits that could be realized in the fur trade made strategic geographic outposts essential. Its location on Lake St. Joseph allowed the Factors of Osnaburgh House to monitor, influence, and control the trade routes in the region, especially the activities of the 'Pedlars' and the NWC. Like scores of other HBC

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[67] Osnaburgh Report, 1813-1814. HBCA B.155/e/1.
[68] Osnaburgh Report, 1821. HBCA B.155/e/9.
[69] Osnaburgh Report, 1822. HBCA B.155/e/10.

posts, Osnaburgh House gave the HBC a strategic foothold in the vast fur trading hinterland. It was because of places exactly like this post that the HBC came to dominate the Canadian fur industry.

The Transportation (R)Evolution

So much of the historiography on the Canadian fur trade and the Hudson's Bay Company is focused on the two hundred years from the Company's genesis in 1670 until the sale of Rupert's Land to Canada in 1870. E.E. Rich's *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, arguably the definitive study of the HBC, neglects roughly one hundred years of history that filled the gap between when the timeframe of his study ends and its publication. Another study, Victor P. Lytwyn's, *The Fur Traders of the Little North: Indian, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821*, presents a narrative history based on HBC post and personal journals, letters, and fur records. Studies such as Rich's and Lytwyn's are important and valid. However, this type of fur trade history has been written, and re-written, for over a generation. A thematic approach to the historical sources, both primary and secondary, can provide a different perspective on this vibrant part of Canada's history. Tracing the evolution of the transportation system in the Little North provides insight into how the region evolved. The changes that occurred in the way trade goods were carried from their sources to their markets are also part of the history of Osnaburgh House. The post played a role in the decision to employ York Boats to replace freighter canoes and it was also influential in the execution of the Company's new policies. York Boats were first employed in the context of the fur trade rivalry in an attempt by the HBC to create a more effective and efficient transportation system.

However, a much greater change occurred after the Canadian Pacific Railway was incorporated in 1881 and the transcontinental railway was completed in 1885. Trade goods and supplies began to be brought to the post from Dinorwic, to the south, and later

Hudson on Lac Seul, rather than being shipped from Fort Albany on the shore of Hudson Bay. The steam revolution also affected water navigation. Steamboats were used to haul goods across large and open bodies of water such as Lac Seul and Lake St. Joseph. After gold was discovered in the region at the turn of the century, the demand for supplies in the remote mines in Red and Pickle Lake, which were not yet accessible by road, heralded the arrival of companies such as the Patricia Transportation Company (PTC). An elaborate system of steamboats, scows, and railed portages was created for transport during the summer months, while tractor trains, which traveled over the frozen lakes, were used in winter. Almost simultaneously, aircraft became a common sight in the skies over Northern Ontario. Travel became easier and more efficient compared to the difficulty of travel in the region during previous decades and centuries. As well as bringing in a greater quantity and quality of supplies, the improvements to transportation also meant improved communication. Both the new sources of supplies and communication changed life at Osnaburgh House and the reserve in a substantial way. In 1954, a road was built from Savant Lake to Central Patricia, marking the end of the transportation revolution in the region. However, the highway also ended the necessity of a HBC post at Lake St. Joseph. After the highway was built, both the reserve and the post were moved due to this new means of transportation. An analysis of the evolution from canoes to transports trucks reveals a different story than is found in most histories of the fur trade.

To paraphrase John A. Macdonald and other Canadian Prime Ministers, while Europe has too much history, Canada has too much geography. The history of transportation and its impact on remote northern regions underscores Macdonald's

insight. In order to appreciate fully the affect mechanization had on life in the Little North, an understanding of the difficult nature of transportation faced by explorers and traders needs to be discussed. In his book, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada: Then and Now*, Eric W. Morse argues that the largest challenge the fur trade faced, "like many other Canadian challenges," was transportation.[70] He also outlined how the geography of Canada was a key factor in the success of the fur trade in Canada.[71] Canada has over half the world's fresh water supply, forty-three percent of which drains into Hudson Bay.[72] The waterway system in Canada is so immense that since the time of the earliest voyageurs it has been possible to travel almost anywhere in Canada, from Gaspé to Vancouver, solely by water.[73] Traders were able to travel among the three great drainage basins that composed the fur trade routes, the Mackenzie, the Hudson, and the St. Lawrence, never facing a portage longer than twenty kilometers.[74] This system of interconnected waterways that spans Canada allowed the HBC to expand, prosper, and eventually gain its monopoly in the fur trade. Ironically, it was the same navigability of these waters that allowed the Pedlars, the Northwest Company, and other forms of opposition to gain footholds in key trading areas and challenge the HBC in the struggle for control over the fur trade.

The huge significance of navigation in the fur trade has caused some historians to reassess the nature of the fur trade rivalry that existed around the turn of the nineteenth century. Daniel Francis argues that the competition,

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[70] Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada: Then and Now*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969, 1.
[71] Ibid, 27-29.
[72] Ibid, 27.
[73] Ibid, 27.
[74] Ibid, 27.

> was not really between two commercial enterprises at all; rather it was a rivalry between two great geographic possibilities. Would the resources of the western hinterland flow southeastward across the Great Lakes and down the Ottawa River to Canada? Or would they take the shorter route north and east through the stunted forest of the shield to the swampy shores of Hudson Bay?[75]

Although the HBC eventually emerged victorious in their battle with the NWC, this result was far from a foregone conclusion during the height of the of the fur trade rivalry. The versatility of the canoe, manned by the Pedlars and NWC employees who were skilled in its use, gave the opponents of the HBC access to even the most remote regions of the Canadian north. However, this does not mean that it was an easy mode of transportation and trade.

In the earliest days of the fur trade, transportation was not an issue for Europeans. Native traders, or 'middlemen' as they are commonly called, traveled to the banks of either Hudson Bay or the St. Lawrence River with their pelts to conduct trade. In the Little North, as early as the 1660s, Native middlemen, trading with both the French and the English, established trade routes between the Little North and the Great Lakes or James Bay.[76] The Swampy Cree who later immigrated to the vicinity of Oxford House, also known as the "Home Guard Cree," were one such Native band that acted as middlemen traders between the HBC and the aboriginal populations that resided inland from the James Bay.[77] However, after the Treaty of Utrech in 1713, which expelled French traders from Hudson Bay, French traders remained determined to control the northwestern fur trade and began their expansion into the Little North by way of the

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[75] Daniel Francis, "Traders and Indians," in *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, eds., R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: Pica Press, 1985), 58.
[76] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 2.
[77] Christopher Hanks, "The Swampy Cree and the Hudson's Bay Company at Oxford House," in *Ethnohistory* 29 (Spring, 1982):104. On line via JSTOR www.jstor.org (October 1, 2006).

Great Lakes.[78] The French traders used canoes to travel thousands of kilometers along rivers, lakes, and portages in search of furs. The Albany River system, with Lake St. Joseph near its head, was an important trade route throughout the duration of the fur trade. Of the two "route ways" into the Little North, the Albany River via Hudson Bay was the most direct.[79] The other route, used first by the French traders and later by the Canadiens out of Montreal, was the Great Lake waters system to the Nipigon River on Lake Superior.[80] Furthermore, for the independent Pedlars and the NWC, Lake St. Joseph was an extremely important depot used in their push west into the Athabasca region.[81] Due to the fact that Lake St. Joseph was such a large body of water with dozens of tributaries, both the HBC and the NWC used the lake as a base for further ventures.[82] A brief exploration of their chosen craft and its capabilities puts the traders' efforts in fuller perspective.

In the early days of the of the fur trade, the birch bark canoe was king. The maneuverability of the canoe made it adaptable to the diverse challenges of the extensive water systems of Canada. Fur traders used two basic models. Firstly, the *canot de maître*, or the Montreal Canoe, was the largest of all canoes. Measuring roughly twelve meters long and two meters wide, the Montreal Canoe could carry between six and twelve men and sixty-five cargo sacks that weighed ninety pounds each; a total weight of up to four tons of cargo.[83] The second type of canoe, the *canot du nord*, or North Canoe, was considerably smaller. At just over eight meters long and one and a half meters wide,

[78] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 5.
[79] Ibid, iii.
[80] Ibid, iii.
[81] Morse, 35.
[82] Rich, 179.
[83] Morse, 22.

the North Canoe could carry between four and eight men and up to thirty sacks of goods.[84] A third canoe, much smaller and more nimble, was used almost exclusively for communication and travel as opposed to freighting.[85] Canoes allowed the traders to penetrate even the most remote and secluded regions. The canoe was used throughout the Little North by both the HBC and NWC for exploration, cartography, and trading. For example, George Sutherland's expedition in 1777, which extended from Albany Fort to Lake Winnipeg and passed through Lake St. Joseph, was conducted using a birch bark canoe (Appendix 1.iii).[86] Sutherland's exploration of the Albany River system was a necessary step in the eventual expansion of the HBC into the Little North and regions beyond. Osnaburgh House was established in 1786, just under a decade after Sutherland's voyage. The canoe was therefore extremely influential in the establishment of Osnaburgh House. However, canoes were not without their drawbacks.

The first problem with the canoe has as much to do with the canoe itself as with the water on which it was traveling. One of the largest obstacles that faced the traders was the portage. Portages were used not only to navigate around dangerous rapids, of which there were plenty, but also to link lakes, rivers, and water systems. All the goods, supplies, and even the canoes themselves had to be carried by hand, trip after trip, across the sometimes-perilous portage. On average, for every kilometer of portage, traders had to walk a total of five kilometers to transport all their gear and supplies.[87] Such a task was not only physically exhausting, but it was a significant impediment to the rate at

[84] Ibid, 22.
[85] Ibid, 23.
[86] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 30.
[87] Ibid, 8.

which traders could move from one area to another, and ultimately to their home bases where their furs were sent to market.

Another disadvantage of the canoe was its structural integrity. Made with a wooden skeleton and a birch bark exterior, canoes were quite unstable and relatively weak.[88] They were susceptible to tipping, which would result in the scattering or loss of valuable commodities and they punctured easily which would delay voyages until repairs could be made.[89] Furthermore, as traders approached the Bay, supplies of birch bark became less readily available.[90] The three main rivers leading to Hudson and James Bay, the Nelson, Churchill, and Albany, all had sections that, when "tumultuous," would cut the sides of the canoe.[91] Most freight canoes did not last for much longer than one trading season.[92] Furthermore, successful navigation of hazardous waterways, which were numerous in the Little North and other regions of Canada, required people skilled in the art of canoeing in order to avoid or escape situations where tipping or damaging the canoe was likely.[93] The Pedlars who came from Montreal and the French voyagers that preceded them possessed those skills. The employees of the HBC, however, did not. The rise of the fur trade rivalry and the subsequent expansion of the HBC during the later part of the 18th century lead the HBC to reevaluate its means of transport. The goal was efficiency. The plan was the York Boat.

Structurally, the York Boat was quite different from the canoe (Appendix 3.i). It was made from solid wooden planks giving it greater integrity when challenged with

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[88] Ibid, 24.
[89] Ibid, 24.
[90] Rich, 310.
[91] Ibid, 228.
[92] Morse, 24.
[93] Ibid, 24.

rough and/or shallow water. The boat also had a flat bottom.[94] This gave the York Boat greater stability in rough water, which was common on larger lakes, as well as a much shallower draft, which allowed it to travel over rapids with a certain degree of ease. Two sizes of York Boats were made. The largest was over thirteen meters long and four meters wide.[95] It held up to twelve men and a vast amount of gear.[96] The smaller boat, designed to carry five men, was approximately eighteen and a half meters long and just over two meters wide.[97] The gunnels (sides) on both sizes of York Boat were considerably higher than on a canoe, which improved its stability and cargo capacity. The distance between the thaft (rower's bench), which was located approximately half way up the gunnels, and the bottom of the boat was two thirds of meter on the large craft, and one-half meter on the smaller one.[98] The greater cargo capacity of the York Boat meant that HBC was able to employ fewer men to move a greater amount of furs or freight, saving the HBC both wages and supplies. A large rudder, used to steer the craft, was attached to the back of the boat.[99] Furthermore, a keelson, "a longitudinal structure running above and fastened to the keel of a boat in order to stiffen and strengthen its framework," meant that a violent run-in with a rock did not necessarily mean repairs.[100] A similar collision with a birth bark canoe undoubtedly would. Furthermore, with favorable winds, the York men could also deploy a sail to increase their speed and ease of travel (Appendix 3.ii). York Boats were built to last.

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[94] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 39.
[95] John Hodgson, "Specifications of Albany Boats and Batteaux," 1803, HBCA, B.3/b/39, fo. 37, quoted in Lytwyn, "The Little North," 41.
[96] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 42.
[97] John Hodgson, quoted in Lytwyn, "The Little North," 41.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 40.
[100] John Hodgson, quoted in Lytwyn, "The Little North," 41.

However, greater size meant greater weight, a major problem on the strenuous portages. To solve this problem, the HBC devised an elaborate system of ropes, pulleys, and log rollers with which the large boats were dragged over portages.[101] Depending on the length and the terrain of the portage, this system was arguably as, or more, efficient than portaging a canoe. The size and structural integrity of the York Boat made it, in most situations, a superior craft for navigating these Northern waterways. The design of the boat, mainly due to the fact that it was rowed rather than paddled and steered with a rudder and its size, was the key that gave the HBC an advantage in transportation over its competitors.

As E.E. Rich boldly stated, "speed and skill was essential in any northern transport system."[102] However, the Hudson's Bay Company lacked men who were highly skilled in canoe travel. They did have a handful of men, such as George Sutherland, James Sutherland, John Best, and others, who were skilled navigators. These men in particular were extremely valuable in the HBC's penetration of the Little North and beyond. However, they were employed more in the exploration of new waters and in the establishment of new camps rather than the actual transport of goods between the inland posts and the Bay. For this task, Orkneymen were most commonly employed. Orkneymen, who were not skilled paddlers, were recruited by the Hudson's Bay Company from the Orkney Islands north of Scotland to work in the Canadian fur trade.[103] According to Morse, the Orkneyman was more admirable that his Canadien counterpart "for he was contending with new conditions in an alien land."[104] HBC trader George

[101] Morse, 24.
[102] Rich, 228.
[103] Lytwyn, "The Little North," iii.
[104] Morse, 13.

Sutherland held a low opinion of the HBC's employees, at least in relation to how they could use the canoe. He stated, "such men as these are [as] capable of working large canoes as I am to be Bishop in the Church of Rome."[105] Thomas Hutchins, along with ex-Canadian trader, Germain Maugenest, was extremely influential in the HBC's decision to use York Boats. Hutchins provided a fuller explanation of Sutherland's bold claim. He wrote:

> The people of Canada whose principal commerce arises from the inland trade, have studied everything for its convenience and by long experience have arrived at great perfection in conducting it, having tradesmen on the spot for every branch, some packing the bales properly for the canoes, other making baskets, cases, rundlets etc. in which the nicest attention is paid to the towage, and weight. The Canadian peasants are brought up to the service from their infancy so that a trader may engage any number of men ready trained and experienced to his hand. These are all great advantages which your Honours have not. When a servant comes first in this service as a labourer, he is awkward and clumsy as it is possible to conceive, and by the time he is rendered useful for inland, he goes home, and we have to begin anew.[106]

The honed skills of the Pedlars and NWC employees were arguably their greatest advantage over the HBC during the fur trade rivalry. However, the York Boats proved to be a more easily manipulated craft and were mastered quickly by the unskilled laborers from the Orkney Islands. It was larger, more stable, more durable, and more easily navigable vessel. According to Rich, "it was also a technical development which placed the Hudson's Bay employee on a equal footing with the French-Canadians."[107] Using the York Boat, the HBC was able to transport cargo and supplies to and from its inland posts, such as Osnaburgh, with greater ease and efficiency. The employment of the York Boat

[105] George Sutherland, HBCA B.211/a/1, fo. 32, quoted in Lytwyn, 38.
[106] Thomas Hutchins, HBCA B.3/b/79, fo. 4, quoted in Lytwyn, "The Little North," 40-41.
[107] Rich, 310.

was a crucial development in the HBC's struggle for control over the fur trade of Northern Canada.

Although the widespread use of York Boats, commonly called *bateaux*, by the HBC occurred under the context of the fur trade rivalry that existed during the four decades that surround the turn of the nineteenth century, they had been widely used in the Canadian fur trade before.[108] The French used the bateaux on St. Lawrence River.[109] However, they did not employ the craft beyond the upper portions of the Great Lakes water way. The first use of these boats by the Hudson's Bay Company was in 1746 on the Albany River where they were used to supply Henley House.[110] Other than the fact that this boat was flat bottomed, had a rudder, and was more durable than canoes, it is unknown how much more 'the bateaux' resembled the later York Boats used by the HBC.[111] The model that was eventually adopted by the Company was based on Germain Maugenest's design (the measurements of which have already been cited).[112] As early as 1780, the use of York Boats began to spread throughout the territory controlled by the HBC and by 1812 they had become fully integrated into the HBC's transportation network.[113]

Routes were assessed according to which craft, the canoe or the York Boat, was best suited for its navigation.[114] Efficiency was achieved. However, this was not done without some trial and error. John Best's expedition in 1785 to settle a post on Lake St. Joseph was delayed when "Best's party found it impossible to travel farther than

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[108] Victor Lytwyn rarely mentions the term York Boat in his entire study, while E.E. Rich rarely employs a different one.
[109] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 39.
[110] Ibid, 39.
[111] Ibid, 39.
[112] Ibid, 39.
[113] Rich, 310.
[114] Morse, 43.

Mamenusca Lake with the batteaux [sic] which were difficult to manipulate past the rapids and shallow stretches of the Albany River."[115] Best and his men were subsequently forced to winter on the lake. However, in the spring, using two slightly-modified bateaux adapted to the shallow Albany River, the party was able to navigate the last stretches of the river and they established Osnaburgh House.[116] Lessons such as these were taken into consideration by HBC employees and eventually shaped the Company's policy of using both the canoe and the York Boat as methods of transportation.

The York Boat was employed on every water system it was able to navigate. Osnaburgh House played an important role in this development. After the decision was made to use the York Boat, Osnaburgh House was "pressed" to build as many of the boats as possible and send them to the Bay for further distribution.[117] The Hudson's Bay Company reported over thirty percent savings on transportation costs after the switch.[118] Furthermore, if the HBC hoped to create successful inland agricultural settlements, like Lord Selkirk's colony on the Red River, the efficiency and capacity of the York Boat was needed to freight the bulky supplies and surpluses to and from the colony.[119] The development of the York Boat was therefore, according to E.E. Rich, an "important stage in the settlement of the north-west."[120] Settlement was also a tactic employed by the HBC to combat the invasion of traders from Montreal. Therefore, the York Boat was an essential development in the HBC's effort to gain a monopoly over the fur trade.

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[115] Lytwyn, "The Little North," 51.
[116] Ibid, 53.
[117] Rich, 228.
[118] Morse, 24.
[119] Rich, 310.
[120] Ibid, 310.

Without this evolution in the HBC's navigation system, it is difficult to say that the outcome of the fur trade rivalry between the HBC and NWC would have been the same. For fifty years that followed the merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821, the York Boat remained central to the Company's transportation system.

Eventually industrialization began to make its way into Canada's north. The steam engine, used in steamboats, tugs, and locomotives, quickly became the new standard for transporting furs, freight, and even people throughout Northern Canada, especially in the Little North. This development changed the direction and routes over which the trade goods flowed. They no longer had to make the longer journey from the Bay, but were now shipped, in the case of Osnaburgh House, a much shorter distance from the many depots located on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and the Canadian National Railway (CNR). This revolutionized the amount and quality of goods that were available as Osnaburgh House, as well as reducing the isolation between the post and the outside world. During the seventy years between the creation of the CPR in 1881 and the creation of road in 1954, Osnaburgh House was situated on the front line of the transportation revolution that occurred in Canada's north. Unfortunately, great portions of the records for this period are missing or unavailable from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Therefore, Jack Wish's *Goldfields of Northern Ontario: A History of the Patricia Transportation Company* will be relied upon heavily. It will, however, be reinforced, where possible, with supplementary sources.

For Osnaburgh House, the CPR and later, the signing of Treaty Number Nine in 1905 (to be dealt with in greater detail later in the paper), marked a significant turning point in the post's history. The signing of the treaty, which entailed the surrender of title

to the land by the aboriginal peoples, was needed for further mechanization and development of the natural resources in the Ontarian northwest. After the signing of the treaty, Osnaburgh House's importance as a trading post began to decline, as did the importance of the fur trade in other regions of Canada. Furthermore, the new mode of travel into Canada's north created a new breed of independent traders who became formidable opponents to the HBC. As Harold A. Innis argued in his paper *The Hudson Bay Railway*, "the fur trade will be subject to decline rather than increase as a result of the competition which will follow improved transportation."[121] Innis goes so far as to argue that the new threat to the HBC was "the transcontinental railways [which] have taken the place of the Northwest Company."[122] Although the improvements in transportation, compounded by a decline in fur prices, led to the decline of the Canadian fur trade, the importance of the HBC and Osnaburgh Post survived in part due to the way they adapted to the new realities of transportation in the North. The creation of efficient transportation systems allowed the post to offer a more diversified inventory of products, not only to the local Native Band, but to the hundreds of surveyors, prospectors, and miners who flooded into the region in search of gold in the 1920s and 1930s. Although the economic transition of the HBC from fur traders to merchandisers, which began after the sale of Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada in the 1870, was never fully realized at Osnaburgh House - furs were traded at the relocated HBC store until the 1980s the transportation revolution assisted Osnaburgh House's transition from a fur trading depot to a sort of general store.

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[121] Harold A. Innis, "The Hudson Bay Railway," in *Geographical Review* 20 (January 1930): 27. On line vie JSTOR www.jstor.org (February 20, 2007).
[122] Ibid, 2.

The officials and employees of the Hudson's Bay Company did not ignore the realities of modernization. In 1871, only a year after the Company had sold the rights to Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada, the Gov. and Com. held a stockholders meeting in London, England to debate and decide the future fate of the HBC.[123] Cyril Graham, president of the Transatlantic Telegraph Company, was sent to Canada by the HBC to prepare a report on ways the Hudson's Bay Company could or needed to adapt to the quickly evolving transportation and economic climate.[124] One of his major commissions was to find a way "to halt [the] spiraling costs and declining profits" of the Canadian fur trade.[125] Graham believed that if the Company invested capital in steam-powered boats and tugs in the Canadian north, the HBC would be able to reduce freight expenses significantly.[126] By this point, the labor-intensive navigation system developed by the HBC around the turn of the nineteenth century, which combined the use of canoes and York Boats, relied heavily on Métis employees who, in recent years, had become "unruly."[127] In a letter addressed to the directors in London, Donald A. Smith, the Canadian commissioner of the HBC, expressed his frustration with Métis who refused to carry large loads and moved at a slow pace.[128] Furthermore, Métis mutinies became common. [129] Smith's report underlined the dependency of the HBC on employees who were not always dependable, and more importantly, rarely efficient. He included his suggested solution to this problem in his letter. He wrote: "for all these evils the only

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[123] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 3.
[124] Ibid, 4.
[125] Ibid, 5.
[126] Ibid, 6.
[127] Ibid, 6.
[128] Ibid, 6.
[129] Ibid, 6.

remedy is the employment of steam."[130] Smith's recommendation was well received by Graham and Graham subsequently included it in his own recommendations; the directors of the HBC eventually accepted this suggestion.[131] It became clear to the HBC that if it wished to maintain its supremacy, the company needed to adapt. The HBC was again forced to change its transportation system, just as it had been forced to do so during the fur trade. Indeed, both the switch from canoes to York Boats around the turn of the nineteenth century, and from York Boats to Steamboats in the 1870s, followed the same line of reasoning; increase the quantity of freight that can be shipped and reduce the manpower needed to do so. Obviously, both these factors affected the HBC's decision to make the switch to steam power.

Some historical inconsistencies exist concerning when the HBC first employed steam power in the fur trade. Arthur J. Ray claims the *Chief Commissioner*, launched on the Saskatchewan River in the spring of 1872, was the first steamboat used by the HBC on inland waterways.[132] However, in his study *The Rainy Lake Region in the Fur Trade*, Theodore Catton claims steam power tugs were active in hauling both people and supplies between Kettle Falls and Rainy Lake as early as 1871.[133] Although the exact date of the HBC's first steamboat voyage is uncertain, the rate at which the Company began its transition to steam power is perfectly clear. In 1874, the supply depot of the Northern Department, which had resided at York Factory for over a century, was moved to Winnipeg "in anticipation of the development of railway and steamboat systems."[134] The move symbolized the HBC's commitment to adapt to the challenges of

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[130] Donald Smith to Gov. & Com., LICHBC, A 11/51, 87-8, quoted in Ray, "The Industrial Age," 6.
[131] Ray, "Industrial Age," 6.
[132] Ibid, 18.
[133] Catton, 54.
[134] Ray, "Industrial Age," 18.

mechanization. Furthermore, the negotiation of a freighting discount of twelve and a half percent in 1884 between the HBC and CPR sealed the fate of the HBC's transportation system.[135] Goods would no longer be brought from the Bay as they had been for over two centuries. For Osnaburgh House, goods were to be shipped north from places such as Dinorwic, Wabigoon, and Hudson. (Appendix 1.v).

A more precise date can be established as to when Osnaburgh House started shipping freight using the power of steam. In the summer 1890, Native laborers were hired to haul goods from Wabigoon, a supply depot created as a result of the construction of CPR, to the post on Lake St. Joseph.[136] Although these goods were carried to the post using the traditional York Boat method, the distance they had to travel had been reduced drastically. Instead of taking forty plus days for Osnaburgh employees to make a return trip to the supply depot at Martin Falls, a HBC post located downstream on the Albany River, it now took a mere twenty days for the team of Native laborers to complete the trip with a full load of freight.[137] The benefits of this new transportation system were felt immediately at Osnaburgh House. There was better quality and a greater variety of goods at the post.[138] Furthermore, the post saved the two weeks of wages and supplies that would have been paid to Osnaburgh employees if the post had continued to get their supplies from Martin Falls. Osnaburgh House continued to use its newfound method of transport. By the turn of the twentieth century, goods were to be shipped over an even shorter route from Dinorwic, another depot along CPR.[139] The benefits of the new transportation system were realized quickly at the post. The improved freighting

[135] Ibid, 19.
[136] Bishop, 79.
[137] Ibid, 79.
[138] Ibid, 79.
[139] Osnaburgh Post Journal, 1904-06. HBCA B.155/a/95.

capabilities of the HBC helped it overcome the emergence of rival trade companies. For example, the McLaren Company established a store on Savant Lake in 1901, approximately ninety kilometers south of Osnaburgh House, and another post on Lake St. Joseph in 1902, located at the entrance to the Pedlar's Path. [140] Ironically, it was the same location of the HBC's competition over a century earlier. By 1910, the efficiency of Osnaburgh House's method of supply drove the McLaren Company out of the area.[141] Over the following years and decades, this system would be modified and expanded.

After the completion of the Canadian National Railway in 1912, Osnaburgh once again experienced a change in its system of transport. The new line ran through Hudson, a small community on the shore of Lac Seul.[142] With this, the source for goods was brought one step closer to the post. Furthermore, steam-powered vessels had begun to replace the York Boat. A tugboat named the *Kaytoo*, and, later, a craft called the *Osca*, towed chains of York Boats full of freight from Root Bay, the most westerly point of Lake St. Joseph, to Osnaburgh House.[143] Again, the length of the trip was shortened and the quality and quantity of supplies at the post were increased. These improvements at Osnaburgh House caused the post to become once again, as it had been during its rivalry with the NWC, an important supply depot, not only for other HBC posts and Native bands, but also for the hundreds of surveyors, prospectors, and government officials who had entered the region due to the gold rush. By 1926, upwards of $70,000 worth of goods and supplies were stockpiled at Osnaburgh House.[144] Although transportation at Osnaburgh had reached an unprecedented level of efficiency, more changes, which would

[140] Bishop, 81.
[141] Ibid, 81.
[142] Ibid, 79.
[143] Ibid, 79, 104.
[144] Ibid, 104.

lead to an even more effective freighting system, were still to come. The gold rush of the late 1920s and 1930s caused the expansion of the transportation system in the region. The creation of the Patricia Transportation Company would eventually bring mechanization into the area in a much greater and a more profound way.

Although gold, silver, and other valuable mineral resources had been discovered in the District of Patricia as early as the 1870s, the borders of which are geographically similar to the region referred to as the Little North, it was not until Christmas of 1925 when gold was discovered in large quantities at Red Lake that Canada's last great gold rush began.[145] The gold rush expanded east towards Osnaburgh House and by the early 1930s Central Patricia Gold Mines Ltd. and Pickle Crow Gold Mines Ltd. were established approximately sixty kilometers north of Lake St. Joseph.[146] Mining demanded an even more efficient transportation system. Machinery, supplies, fuel, and manpower had to be brought to the mines, and the heavy loads of ore had to be taken to depots along the CPR and the CNR. Although these demands caused the creation of scores of transportation companies, the Patricia Transportation Company, which was incorporated in 1931 with it head quarters in Hudson on Lac Seul, quickly dominated the business of supplying the new mining operations. Osnaburgh House was able to benefit from the further expansion of the transportation system in the Patricia District.

Jack Wish's history of the Patricia Transportation Company contains a vast wealth of material on the methods employed by the PTC. However, both the value and the limitations of Wish's study must be assessed. Jack Wish was not a historian; he was an accountant for the PTC. Some of his research is flawed. For example, he dates the

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[145] Jack Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario: A History of the Patricia Transportation Company* (Winnipeg: James Richardson & Sons, Limited, 1996), 5.
[146] Bishop, 71.

establishment of Osnaburgh House incorrectly.[147] Therefore, parts of Wish's studies must be read, understood, and used with some caution. However, as an employee of the PTC for almost three decades, he provides a first-hand account of the PTC's history that few others could. Indeed, no others have. However, due to his association with the PTC, his analyses have to be treated carefully, and his account of his company's history may be, unjustifiably, given greater merit than it deserves. His work straddles the line between a primary and secondary source, and is treated as such.

The basic method of hauling freight during summer months did not differ greatly from the methods employed by the HBC and Osnaburgh House in the previous decades. Using steamboats and tugs, boats packed with freight were loaded directly from the CNR's rail cars, hauled across Lac Seul to Root Portage, transferred overland to another steamboat train on Lake St. Joseph, and then, finally brought to Osnaburgh House and Doghole Bay (the most easterly point of Lake St. Joseph where the goods were taken north to the Pickle Crow and Central Patricia mines) (Appendix 3.iii, 3.iv, 3.v). However, the PTC made two important improvements. The first was the introduction of the scow (Appendix 3.vi). The scows used by the PTC were large, wooden barges of varying size. They were, depending on the capacity of the steamer and the scow, able to haul between fifteen and one hundred tons of freight.[148] Eventually the forty-five ton scow became the standard size used by the PTC.[149] The scows surpassed the hauling capabilities of freighter canoes and York Boats by far, allowing the PTC to supply the growing demands of the mines in Red and Pickle Lake. Osnaburgh House also benefited from the transition. Even larger quantity of goods could be brought to the post.

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[147] Wish, 45.
[148] Ibid, 32-38.
[149] Ibid, 43.

Furthermore, the HBC no longer had to transport their furs and supplies. This further cut transport costs and allowed HBC employees to focus on other ventures. By 1935, the PTC had gained an exclusive contract with both mines at Pickle Lake and Osnaburgh House on Lake St. Joseph. [150] This was an important development that contributed to the success of the PTC. However, one obstacle remained in the way of the PTC, the same obstacle that the HBC and independent traders had faced since the beginning of the fur trade: the portage.

The advancements in steam technology facilitated the transport of the exponentially larger and heavier loads. Although steamboats traversed Lac Seul and Lake St. Joseph easily, the three and half mile portage, known as Root Portage, between the two lakes proved to be an enormous obstacle, as were the other portages the company faced. To create a solution to the portage problem, not only at Root Portage, but also the several portages the company encountered on the trips to Red Lake, the PTC contracted the Chukuni River Portage Company.[151] By the opening of the 1936 transport season, a system was developed and employed by which scows were hoisted onto flatbed rail cars and then moved across a marine railway (Appendix 3.vii).[152] Scows weighing up to fifteen tons could now cross the portages without being unloaded.[153] The efficiency of the new system saved the company a great deal of time, manpower and, therefore, money. However, the system was yet to be perfected and this was subsequently achieved at Root River when a gasoline powered Whitcome "Dinkey" locomotive, which ran on standard gauge railways, was employed to haul freight over the three and half miles of

[150] Ibid, 41.
[151] Ibid, 38.
[152] Ibid, 38.
[153] Ibid, 38.

track.[154] The gasoline-powered locomotive was eventually replaced by a diesel engine.[155] Although a great deal of work was still required to traverse the Root Portage, it was far easier and required fewer men to operate successfully. Finally, the PTC, with the advantage of mechanization, was able to conquer the portage, a task that explorers, traders, and trappers had been struggling with for centuries.

Although the PTC was able to overcome the challenge of portaging their heavy loads, one aspect of marine travel was completely beyond the control of the company: weather. Anyone who has lived or traveled in northwestern Ontario understands the unpredictable nature of the weather. Lake St. Joseph, having large sections of open water, is extremely susceptible to the effects of foul weather. In the late summer, powerful thunderstorms, with lightning and high winds, can transform an otherwise peaceful voyage down the lake into a treacherous struggle with waves upwards of two meters. Although the PTC had few water-related accidents, when they did occur, they were extremely costly. Jack Wish's depiction of an incident in September of 1939, in which the *Lac Joe*, a steamboat captained by Stewart Vincent encountered a storm, highlights the violent nature of Lake St. Joseph and the effect it had on the PTC. He writes:

> About halfway to his destination, a severe storm developed and Captain Vincent did not have a chance to reach shore for shelter. The scow swamped in the waves and 25 tons of sugar dissolved and the sacks just floated away. The balance of the cargo in the scow was also water damaged. When the storm abated, Vincent proceeded to Doghole Bay, with one loaded scow as well as the swamped scow in tow. Upon arrival at Doghole Bay, it was discovered that the paper cartons containing the canned goods had fallen apart and all the labels on the cans had come off, so no one could tell what they contained (Appendix 3.viii).[156]

[154] Ibid, 41.
[155] Ibid, 41.
[156] Ibid, 43, 46.

The load was destined for the Patricia Gold mine and was supposed to supply the mining camp for the duration of the winter.[157] A scramble ensued to re-supply the mine before the ice set in for the winter.[158] Despite the fact that the PTC's losses were covered by insurance, it was nonetheless a huge setback. Although weather was often a problem for the PTC during summer months, it actually facilitated travel during the winter months.

With the success of the mines in Pickle and Red Lake, the necessity for winter transport developed. Winter transportation was almost impossible in the years before mechanization. Entities such as the Northern Transportation Company, which tried to haul freight in the Patricia District without the help of mechanization, failed. On one expedition from Hudson to the HBC post on Women Lake, the company employed the horse and sleigh method to haul its cargo over the frozen ice.[159] However, the harsh conditions and sub-zero temperatures of the northern Ontario winter took the lives of several of the company's sixteen horses and thoroughly jeopardized the success of the trip.[160] Because trucks were so light, they were also deemed unusable for winter freighting missions.[161] For hauling goods over the frozen lake, tractor trains become the main method of the PTC (Appendix 3.ix). The tractor of choice was the Cletrac 55, a heavy tractor made by the Cleveland Tractor Company.[162] Although the Cletrac tractor was extremely fuel inefficient – it would take an entire sleigh of forty-five gallon drums of fuel to make a return trip from Hudson to Doghole Bay – the sheer volume of freight the tractor trains could haul because of the power of the Cletrac 55 was more than enough

[157] Ibid, 43.
[158] Ibid, 46.
[159] Ibid, 53.
[160] Ibid, 53.
[161] Ibid, 53.
[162] Ibid, 54.

to justify the heavy consumption of fuel.[163] The advent of winter freighting changed the lives of the people living at places such as Osnaburgh House. Whereas in the previous centuries winter isolated the people living in the north, the PTC brought a steady supply of goods and, more importantly, access to the outside world to an otherwise completely isolated portion of Northern Ontario. Harold A. Innis expresses this point in his study *The Hudson Bay Railway*. He writes: "The tractor has made accessible the territories beyond the reach of the railroad and has transformed the long closed winter into the open season of transportation."[164] Without the cargo capacity of the PTC's tractor trains, the success of the mines in Pickle and Red Lake would have been much more difficult to realize.

However, winter transport was also not without its dangers. One of the major obstacles that faced the PTC during winter travel was slush (Appendix 3.x). Heavy snowfalls would weigh down the ice, forcing water through cracks, thereby creating treacherous slush.[165] The top level of slush froze and after another snowfall, the cycle would repeat itself.[166] Furthermore, since lakes such as Lac Seul and Lake St. Joseph are reservoirs, when water was released from the lake and the water level dropped, ridges of ice were formed on the lake that were difficult to traverse.[167] Another obvious risk of hauling goods across frozen lakes was breaking through into icy waters. Although the PTC never lost a life because of drowning, this is not to suggest they didn't lose tractors and freight.[168] However, due to the expense and importance of the tractor, the PTC

[163] Ibid, 54.
[164] Innis, 24.
[165] Wish, 75.
[166] Ibid, 75.
[167] Ibid, 75.
[168] Ibid, 66.

devised a system by which divers would attach chains to the sunken tractor and subsequently raise it to the surface where it would then be taken away for a complete overhaul (Appendix 3.xi).[169] Just as during the summer months, hauling freight in the winter was subject to the environment.

As companies such as the PTC were revolutionizing the way transport was conducted on the land and water, another technological advancement, the airplane, began to affect life in Canada's north. Jack Wish argues, "It would be difficult to overstate the importance of aircraft in helping to develop the mining industry in the Patricia District."[170] Airplanes were not only used to haul freight, but they also served prospectors and surveyors in locating valuable mineral deposits. In 1928, the Northern Aerial Mineral Exploration (NAME) company made the discovery of gold at Pickle Lake that later resulted in the establishment of both Central Patricia Gold Mines and Pickle Crow Gold Mines.[171] Aircraft also had an immediate impact on life at Osnaburgh House (Appendix 3.xii). Entries from the post journal written by A. Hughes, Factor at Osnaburgh House from 1931 to 1940, explain the effect the airplane had on the post. The post journal from 1938-39 has frequent notations about the frequency of air traffic at the post. Between May 28, 1938 and June 10, 1938, there were five days in which an airplane was reported as visiting Osnaburgh House.[172] On June 4, Hughes describes how a "Canadian Airways 'Norseman' [was] in after dinner with [a] small shipment from Winnipeg & [a] small supply of fresh vegetables and meat from Sioux Lookout."[173] Before the use of aircraft, fresh vegetables and meat, with the exception of the few root

[169] Ibid, 63.
[170] Ibid, 87.
[171] Ibid, 94.
[172] Osnaburgh Post Journal, 1938-39. HBCA B.155/a/99.
[173] Ibid.

vegetables that could be grown at camp and wild game, were a luxury at the Osnaburgh House. The airplane also served an even more vital purpose. In the spring of 1938, the wife of S. Moquano, a Native man who traded at Osnaburgh House, was suffering from blood poisoning. She was airlifted from the post to receive medical attention.[174] Although it is unclear if the woman survived her illness, it is almost certain that if she had not received any medical assistance she would have died. Airplanes were not only used to ship out those who needed medical attention, they were also used to bring doctors to the post. On June 10, 1938, a Dr. Bell arrived at the post via airplane and treated a number of patients.[175] One such patient, the wife of Henry Keweash had, according to Hughes, "a hopeless case of T.B."[176] As with the case of Moquano's wife, the fate of Keweash's wife is uncertain. However, the post journal implies she recovered from her illness, something that would have been a remote possibility had she not received treatment from Dr. Bell.[177] The entries from Hughes' journal demonstrate not only the frequency, but also the importance of air travel at Osnaburgh House.

The transportation revolution changed the way people lived, not only in the Patricia District, but also throughout Canada's north. Great optimism was expressed around the turn of the twentieth century over the social and economic possibilities the new source of transportation would bring to northern Ontario. However, some also expressed concern over the possible repercussions improved mobility would have on Native populations. A brief analysis of the reports made by Edward Barnes Borron and Robert Bell will help articulate both points of view.

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[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

Borron emigrated from England to Canada in 1850.[178] His list of credentials is long, including a four-year stint as a Liberal MP for the Algoma district in northern Ontario. [179] Borron was enthusiastic about the development of northern railways. In one of his reports to the Ontario government, he expressed his wishes that the CPR be built "as far North as the interest of our Province and the Dominion permit."[180] He believed rail would "open up the country," and was "the only hope I entertained of relief" in Ontario's north.[181] He also expressed great concern over the possible ramifications the construction of rail lines would have on the Native populations of northern Ontario. He wrote:

> It is true that the construction of this railway will materially reduce the price of provisions, but it cannot compensate the Indian for the loss of furs and the game that his traps and his gun would otherwise have obtained for him. It matters little to him that the price of food and clothing may be lower if he is unable to get the furs to barter or give in exchange for them.[182]

Borron was afraid that improved mobility in the north would result in an influx of independent trappers and traders that would eventually damage the fur bearing populations of the north and the Native populations that depended on them for survival.

Robert Bell, arguably one of Canada's most pre-eminent geographers, also made government reports on the possibility of railways in Canada's north.[183] However, his reports were more optimistic. Bell often referred to Hudson Bay as the "Mediterranean

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[178] R. Matthew Bray, "Borron, Edward Barnes," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000. www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio/asp?BioId=4134&query=Borron.
[179] Ibid.
[180] HBCA D.26/15
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] W. A. Waiser, "Bell, Robert," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000. www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio/asp?BioId=41323&query=Robert.

sea of North America."[184] He believed if rail links were built to the Bay, it would give great advantage to the settlement and trade of the western provinces as well as creating substantial economic opportunities in the development of natural resources where the railway was laid.[185] He also suggested that rail lines to Hudson Bay would greatly reduce cost of shipping from the western provinces. This argument was based on the fact that Churchill, Manitoba, and Montreal, Quebec are about equal distance to the great English port of Liverpool.[186] However, if a rail line were built from Winnipeg to the Bay, it would save thousands of kilometers in shipping costs on goods that would otherwise have to be shipped to Montreal.[187] After reading Bell's reports, it becomes clear he believed the construction of railways in Canada's north was vital to the success of Canada's economy. It is clear that Borron's predictions bare a closer resemblance to current realities than Bell's. However, both men's work was influential to the way in which northern Ontario and Canada were developed.

The creation of efficient transportation on and around Lake St. Joseph resulted in several changes in the region. The mechanization of transport facilitated, indeed was necessary, for the success of the mining operations at Pickle Lake, Central Patricia, and Pickle Crow Gold Mines. A great physical change was the byproduct of the success of the mining industry. In 1935 a hydroelectric damn, which raised the water level of Lake St. Joseph by approximately nine feet, was built to supply power to the mines at Pickle Lake, Central Patricia, and Pickle Crow (Appendix 3.xiii). As a result of the flooding,

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[184] Robert Bell, *On the Commercial Importance of Hudson's Bay with Remarks on Recent Surveys and Investigations*, Proceeding of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography, October 11. 1881.
[185] Robert Bell, *The Hudson's Bay Route to Europe*, Read before the Geographical Association of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Winnipeg, Manitoba, August 25, 1909.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

Osnaburgh House was rebuilt, in basically the same location, but on higher ground (Appendix 3.xiv, 3.xv). Eventually the success of the mines resulted in another physical change in the region surrounding Osnaburgh House; a road was built from Savant Lake to Central Patricia in 1954.[188] The extension of Highway 599 to Central Patricia marked the culmination of the transportation revolution. In 1963 the post was closed and moved to a new site along the newly-built highway.[189] It is a great irony that an efficient transportation system was created, something that the HBC had been trying to achieve for centuries, Osnaburgh House closed.

[188] Bishop, 61.
[189] C.H.J. Winter, "Northern Ontario District," in *Moccasin Telegraph* (Winter 1970), 93.

The Hudson's Bay Company and the First Nations of Osnaburgh House: An Intimate Relationship

Since its incorporation in 1670, a dynamic relationship has existed between The Hudson's Bay Company and the various indigenous groups that have engaged in business with the company. The same can be said of Osnaburgh House since is founding in 1786. Rather than making a complete assessment of the history of the Mishkeegogamang First Nations – such a task is beyond the scope of this study – certain elements of the two parties' interaction will be assessed. The first element, trade goods, discusses the type of goods traded and their effect on the First Nation population. The tools, pots, and weaponry that were traded to the Natives changed the way the Native population lived. Arguably, the most intrusive and devastating trade goods were tobacco and, to a much larger extent, alcohol. A second element of the HBC's relationship with the Natives was the role the Company played in missionary efforts undertaken by various religious sects, more specifically, the Church Mission Society of the Anglican Church. HBC employees administered services to Native people that were religious, or more specifically, Christian in nature. Furthermore, the HBC was one of the few places where missionaries were able to gather and preach to large numbers of Natives. Tracking down family groups in their far-flung hunting grounds was virtually impossible and definitely ineffective. Osnaburgh House and other similar posts were, therefore, the center of missionary efforts in the region. The life of Thomas Vincent, Archdeacon of Moosonee, helps to portray, not only the role of HBC posts and Osnaburgh House in missionary efforts, but also the struggle people of mixed blood experienced when dealing with, often racist, religious officials. Just as the HBC had assisted missionaries in their attempts to contact the Native population, they provided significant help to the Dominion Government of Canada in its

efforts to create a treaty with the Native people who lived in the James Bay watershed. This group of aboriginals currently call themselves the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Their lands spans over most of northern Ontario; with the Manitoba border to the west, the Quebec border to the east, Hudson and James Bay to the north, and the Hudson Bay watershed to the south. The treaty's commissioners used Osnaburgh House, and other HBC posts, as central meeting points, just as the missionaries had before them. Almost all the bands that signed Treaty Number Nine did so at a HBC post. The treaty had a significant impact on both the Miskegogamang people and Osnaburgh House. For the First Nations, the treaty had, and continues to have, serious social and economic implications. For Osnaburgh House, and other HBC posts, the treaty helped to facilitate the Company's transition from the fur trade, an economic system that was based on credit, into mercantile business, based on cash currency. The signing of Treaty Number Nine marked the beginning of the HBC's and Osnaburgh House's adaptation to the quickly evolving social and political environment of the Ontario's north. The newly formed relationship between the Natives and the Crown's government in Canada, which resulted from the signing of the numbered and other Native treaties, was an important factor that influenced Native enlistments in the First World War. Indeed, it was an important factor in aboriginal involvement in all wars of the British Empire, both on the continent and abroad. William Semia Oombash, a member of the Cat Lake Band, who traded at the Post and who was employed as a laborer at Osnaburgh, joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) and served with distinction. He is buried in the graveyard located behind the church at Osnaburgh House with his regiment number on his head stone. Throughout its history, Osnaburgh House has been a social and economic center

for surrounding Native groups. As the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of Treaty Number Nine, which was held at the Old Post and Village, demonstrates, Osnaburgh House continues to play an important role in the ongoing history of the Mishkeegogamang and Nishnawbe Aski First Nations.

The relationship that existed between the First Nations and the HBC was consistently a relationship of self-interest for the HBC. Trade goods, especially weapons, were implemented to boost fur returns. Alcohol and Tobacco were traded and given as presents to promote loyalties, especially during the competition amongst fur trade rivals. The missionary efforts that were conducted at the Osnaburgh House reinforced the post's importance as center for cultural activity. The HBC stood to receive considerable economic gains from the annuity payments given to the Natives as a result of the signing of Treaty Number Nine. The facilitation of the treaty process also offered potential political gains and considerations from both the provincial and federal government. Although the HBC may have considered their services, from trade goods, to missionaries, to treaty signings, as beneficial to the Native peoples, the Company was consistently motivated by self-interest and self-preservation.

The goods that were traded to the Native people at Osnaburgh House can be classified into two general categories: items that were novel and items that were practical or technical. Although alcohol and tobacco can be considered as novel trade items, they will be addressed in a separate section. Both types of trade goods had cultural ramifications on the aboriginal populations. The effect of trade goods on Natives is discussed often in the historiography of the Canadian fur trade. Ian T. Stuart, in his study, *Indians and the Lake Superior Trade*, accurately describes the type of argument

historians have made about the effect of trade goods on Native populations. He argues that after Europeans came into contact with Native peoples it did not take long before

> tribes became dependent on European trade for their survival. As time progressed the Indian's dependence on the trading post increased until they could not return to their old ways of life…the Native economy and social structure was destroyed by the introduction of European manners and material.[190]

Charles A. Bishop, in his book *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade: An Historical and Ecological Study*, offers a systematic interpretation of the effects of trade goods on the culture of Natives who traded at Osnaburgh House. He outlined a three-stage evolution. Firstly, a period of "augmentation" existed where traditional culture was "modified to incorporate new elements."[191] Secondly, the "replacement" stage encompasses the substitution of Native tools and traditions with "Euro-Canadian" ones.[192] The final stage, "reinterpretation," occurred when European culture, manifested by European goods, took on "new meaning or function," separate from the original Native or European meanings.[193] An analysis of the trade goods that were traded will help clarify exactly how this cultural destruction occurred.

In his study *Competition and Conservation in the Early Subartic Fur Trade*, Arthur J. Ray argues: "To draw more Indians into the Company's trading network, men were sent inland to give presents to leading Indians in hope of persuading them to bring their followers down to the bay."[194] Although Ray's argument is set in the context of the fur trade rivalry that existed around the turn of the nineteenth century, his argument can

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[190] Ian T. Stuart, "Indians and the Lake Superior Trade," in *Lake Superior to Rainy Lake: Three Centuries of Fur Trade History*, ed., Jean Morrison (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 2003), 89.
[191] Bishop, 19.
[192] Ibid, 19.
[193] Ibid, 19.
[194] Ray, "Competition and Conservation," 384.

be applied to a much larger time frame. The HBC, and other traders, often gave novel gifts in attempts to gain trading loyalties. Gifts were also given to Natives traders as rewards for lucrative returns. One such item was the tinkler cones, also referred as jinglers or janglers (Appendix 2.i).[195] Tinkler cones were made from scrap metal, usually brass or copper, and were given as rewards to productive traders.[196] Glass beads, also referred as trading beads, were used in similar contexts. Although Natives had traditionally made and used beads from natural resources such as stone, bones, and shells, the glass beads introduced by the traders, with their vibrant colors, were foreign to Natives.[197] The tinkler cones and glass beads quickly became part of the dress and personal decoration of North American aboriginals. Both tinkler cones and glass beads, among other artifacts, were found in the burial bundle of an aboriginal man who was discovered and excavated at the Old Post and Village in the summer of 2002 (Appendix 2.ii).[198] Although it is difficult to assign a definite date to the burial, one of the beads found in the bundle, a "large tubular glass bead," is similar to beads found at an archaeological dig at the Fort St. Joseph site, near Nile, Michigan, which were dated to the period between 1700-1781.[199] Trade medallions, such as the one in Appendix 2.iii were also employed, albeit less commonly, as rewards for productive traders (Appendix 2.iii). Another novel trade item that was either traded or given to Natives was the 'Jew's' harp, also referred to as a jaw's harp (Appendix 2.iv).[200] Natives used this item as a noise or music maker. The particular Jew's harp in Appendix 2.iv was found by the

[195] Lars Hothem, *Indian Trade Relics: Identification and Value* (Paducah, Kentucky: Collector Books, 2003), 163, 294.
[196] Ibid, 163.
[197] Hothem, 6.
[198] William Ross, *The Analysis of an Historical Burial Bundle from Osnaburgh House and other Associated Artifacts* (Thunder Bay: Ross Archaeological Research, 2003), 3.
[199] Ibid, 8.
[200] Hothem, 163.

author on one of the many dirt paths at the Old Post and Village. Although professionals and semi-professionals have conducted archaeological research at the Old Post and Village, it is not uncommon to find artifacts at random such as the author and countless numbers of Old Post staff and visitors have. Items like the tinkler cone, glass beads, and the 'Jew's' harp were adapted into the Native's cultural dress and interaction. Other trade goods had a greater effect on the Native populations.

When the HBC and other traders entered the remote regions of the Little North, they brought with them European technology. Charles A. Bishop notes that even at the earliest stages of the fur trade in the seventeenth century, "Native technology was being rapidly replaced by foreign materials."[201] It is important to understand that the technology not only replaced Native materials, but it also replaced Native methods. Before the arrival of Europeans, Natives used weapons, such as the bow and arrow and spears that were made of wood and stone.[202] They were able to sustain their existence using these tools for hunting and fishing.[203] However, these weapons were inefficient for the increased level of hunting necessitated by the fur trade.[204] Natives turned to European tools and methods to meet the new demand. Nets, hooks, metal traps, and most importantly, guns and ammunition, soon replaced traditional Native hunting practices (Appendix 2.v, 2.vi).[205] Furthermore, as soon as one band or clan of Natives acquired a gun, it forced other Natives in the area to also make the switch.[206] Charles McKenzie, a

[201] Bishop, 108.
[202] Morse, 16.
[203] Ibid, 16.
[204] Ibid, 16.
[205] Bishop, 190.
[206] Morse, 16.

Factor at the Lac Seul HBC post, commented on the necessity of guns in the Little North Fur Trade in 1852. He wrote:

> There is another heavy article in the trade – that traders seldom consider as a *First Necessary* is – Guns – but what is an Indian without a Gun? – He can make shift for other Articles – but his Bow & Arrows are a lame substitute for a Gun unless he was on Horse back in the Plains.[207]

Since Osnaburgh House, especially after the end of the fur trade rivalry in 1821, was the only place a Native could procure guns and ammunition, the gun was a crucial factor in the development of a relationship of dependence between Osnaburgh House and the Natives who conducted trade at the post.

However, tools for hunting and fishing were not the only trade items that replaced Native technology. Trade pots, knives, ice chisels, axes, gunflints, steel and later matches, lighters for fire starting, clothing, boots, and the famous Hudson's Bay Company blanket, all changed the way Natives lived (Appendix 2.vii, 2.viii). These goods too created a dependency on the post. Charles A. Bishop argues that as early as the late 1820s, the Ojibwa people who traded at Osnaburgh had become "totally reliant upon the trading post for survival."[208] By 1910, even the ability to start fires with a gunflint and steel was replaced by the convenience of matches and lighters (Appendix 2.ix, 2.x).[209] Essential items such as matches were often used to gain and maintain Native loyalty to the HBC post.[210] These trade policies, which exploited the Native dependency on European goods, deepened the reliance of the Native on the HBC post. In his report to the Canadian Government in 1890, Mr. Edward Barnes Borron emphasized this development. He wrote:

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[207] Charles McKenzie to Fort Albany, HBCA B.107/a/29, quoted in Bishop, 190.
[208] Bishop, 12.
[209] Ibid, 82.
[210] Ibid, 82.

> They have in the course of two centuries, become dependent on the fur trade not merely for ornaments, or even luxuries, but for the very necessaries of life…flour, pork, tallow and woolen clothing and blankets having now become necessaries of life to many of the present generation of Natives, and powder, shot, guns, axes and nets…[have] become equally indispensable to even the rudest Indian…The position of the Natives of this territory in relation to the Hudson's Bay Company and its officers has therefore, been for many years, and still continues to be, a position of absolute subservience and dependence.[211]

Borron's report is as an accurate representation of the situation of Natives who traded at Osnaburgh House around the turn of the twentieth century. The goods that were traded at Osnaburgh House destroyed the Natives' traditional methods of living, leaving them reliant on the trading post for survival.

It is difficult to qualify any one trading good as having a greater impact on the Native populations than another. There was no single item that altered the life of aboriginals; rather it was a combination of all trading goods over a long period of time that eventually led to Native dependency on the trading post. However, tobacco, and to a much greater extent, alcohol, were arguably the trade goods that had the greatest and most lasting impact on aboriginal populations. Like the trade of novel items such as tinkler cones and trade beads, alcohol and tobacco were used to gain loyalties. The trade of tobacco transformed a substance used for ceremonial purposes into a substance of addiction that deepened the Natives dependence on the post (Appendix 2.xi). However, the introduction of alcohol, something foreign to most North American Native groups, had a more severe effect on aboriginal populations. Some historians, such as George Bryce, have downplayed the importance of alcohol as a trade good. He argues:

> No feeling was stronger in a Hudson's Bay Company trader's mind that he was in a country without police, without military, without laws, and thus his own life and his people's lives were in danger should drunkenness

[211] Mr. Borron's Report On Indian in the Southern Department, HBCA D.26/15.

> prevail - preservation inclined every trader to prevent the use of spirits among the Indians.[212]

Bryce's argument seems rather naïve, but does have some logic. It also has some historical basis. In 1793, Joseph Colen, Factor at York Factory, expressed his concerns over the Canadian traders' practice of distributing alcohol to gain trade loyalties. In his post journal he wrote:

> These Canadian Traders are so artful…as they attend their tents with liquor, and collect the produce of their hunt almost immediately on animals being killed…The number of Natives who have fallen victims to intoxication with these two years are many, and should the Canadians continue their practice of carrying strong spirits to the tents of Natives I much fear the whole country will soon be depopulated.[213]

Despite the fact that some HBC employees, such as Colen, were genuinely concerned about the effect of alcohol on Native populations, other employees were more concerned with fur returns and were willing to adopt the practices of the Canadien traders in order to achieve their objectives. Upon learning about the success of Ezekiel Solomon, an independent trader from Montreal who traded in the region around Lake St. Joseph during the 1770s, John Kipling, Factor at Gloucester House, ordered men be sent to the area with "spirituous Liquors" in order to entice the Natives to conduct trade with the HBC.[214] Although Colen was concerned about the consumption of alcohol among Natives, Kipling had no hesitation in employing alcohol as a strategic measure to procure better returns. The differences in the two men's positions represent the lack of regulation in the area. However, in 1839, Governor George Simpson prohibited the sale of alcohol

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[212] George Bryce, *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 430.
[213] York Factory Post Journal, HBCA B.239/a/95 fo. 22d, 44d-45, quoted in Lytwyn, "The Anishinabeg," 32.
[214] John Kipling to Gov. and Com., September 28, 1783. HBCA A.11/44 fo 192.

in the Albany District, where Osnaburgh House was situated.[215] The prohibition lasted for several decades but Natives reacted sourly and sometimes violently to the new policy.[216] Also, Natives often found ways around Simpson's decree.[217] Furthermore, after the arrival of the CPR in the 1880s, a wave of independent traders flooded into the region and alcohol was once again used to gain trade loyalties.[218] The drastic and long-lasting effects of the introduction of alcohol to the Natives is still felt at New Osnaburgh and other reserves throughout Canada.

The goods traded to Natives at Osnaburgh House and other regions had serious repercussions. Although items such as guns, pots, axes, nets, and so forth, made life easier for the Natives, it did so at the cost of the Natives' cultural and economic autonomy. The addictiveness of tobacco and alcohol further deepened the Natives' dependence on the trading post. The fur trade made HBC posts such as Osnaburgh House central to aboriginal life. Both missionaries and government exploited the social reality of the HBC post to achieve their goals of Christianizing and assimilation.

The Hudson's Bay Company affected Native culture both through the style of trade they conducted and the type of goods they traded. However, the Company was also involved with, and often facilitated, external factors that affected the Native's social, cultural, and economic reality. One such external factor was missionaries. The earliest missionaries in the region that lies between Lake Superior and Hudson's Bay were French Catholic Franciscans who established a mission near Lake Nipigon in 1622.[219]

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[215] Bishop, 130.
[216] Ibid, 130.
[217] Ibid, 130.
[218] Ibid, 80-81.
[219] Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and its Historical Changes* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1983), 26.

Jesuit missionaries also entered the area two decades later in 1642.[220] Despite the efforts of French missionaries, according to historian George Bryce, "no trace of Christianity was left behind."[221] Anglican missionaries were basically non-existent in the greater area until 1820 with the arrival of John West, and until 1841, there was no regular presence of missionaries at Osnaburgh House. [222] William Bertal Heeney commented on the lack of a missionary presence in the region in his chapter on John West in *Leaders of the Canadian Church*. He wrote:

> It is shocking to think that the gentlemen adventurers of the Hudson's Bay [Company] and their families in the old land, members of the Christian Church no doubt, could live for many decades in full enjoyment of the profits of trade with the Natives roving on the bleak shores of our artic [sic] seas and the Christless plains of the Canadian West, and yet give no heed to the Indian's cry for the Bread of Life.[223]

Although there is validity to Heeney's statement – it is true that HBC employees were, throughout the history of the Company, primarily concerned with trade – his remarks are aggrandizing. Furthermore, his statement downplayed the role HBC posts had in shaping the nature of Christianity among aboriginals in Canada's north.

Missionary efforts in the Rupert's Land were almost always conducted in HBC trading posts with the assistance, or at least the approval, of HBC employees. However, this is truer with missions associated with the Church of England as the HBC favored Anglicanism and Catholic missionaries were generally not well received at HBC posts.[224] However, a small Catholic presence did exist amongst the Natives who traded at Osnaburgh House. In 1934, among a population of four hundred and ninety six, sixty-six

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[220] Lytwyn, 1.
[221] Bryce, 417.
[222] Canon Bertal Heeney, "John West," in *Leaders of the Canadian Church*, ed. William Bertal Heeney (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Limited, 1920), 11., Bishop, 153.
[223] Ibid, 22.
[224] Bishop, 70, 154.

Osnaburgh Natives considered themselves Catholic, while four hundred and thirty considered themselves Anglican.[225] Despite the erection of a Catholic church in 1951 across the lake from Osnaburgh House adjacent to the old Osnaburgh Village, the Catholic influence among the Natives was never as significant because the HBC favored Anglicans, or at least Protestants.[226] Therefore, Catholic missionaries will be, for the most part, disregarded.

Although the HBC was never officially active (with the exception of Lord Selkirk's colony at Red River) in recruiting and administering missionaries, the HBC post played a central role in the missionary efforts that were conducted in Rupert's Land. Christopher Vecsey, in his study *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and its Historical Changes*, comments on the importance of the HBC post to missionaries who "consciously" established missions near popular trading stations.[227] Charles A. Bishop, commenting on missionary efforts undertaken in the mid-nineteen century, argued, because

> the community was too unstable to have a church, and [since] missionary endeavors were restricted to the summer months…traders performed Sunday religious services and funerals. [228]

Although not their primary concern, HBC employees often engaged in religious interaction with Natives. Furthermore, without a central place, such as Osnaburgh House, where the missionaries could gather Native listeners, concerted efforts to Christianize the local Native population would have been almost impossible.

As the center of missionary efforts, contrary to the statement of Canon Heeney, HBC employees were of vital importance to the process of Christianization. John West,

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[225] Ibid, 90.
[226] Ibid, 70.
[227] Vecsey, 19.
[228] Bishop, 148.

an employee of the HBC, was also a missionary.[229] Osnaburgh House employees provided religious services in the years and decades that preceded the regular presence of Anglican missionaries, and continued to do so even after the church was establish in 1898. James Sutherland, Factor at Osnaburgh House from 1794 to 1796, was an Elder of the Church of Scotland.[230] Sutherland had the authority to marry and baptize and there is evidence he exercised his powers often.[231] When missionaries became more common at Osnaburgh House, HBC employees welcomed their presence. In his journal, Osnaburgh House Factor James Heron commented favorably on the arrival of missionary William Mason of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, who, according to Charles A. Bishop, was the first "trained" missionary active in the Osnaburgh House area.[232] In the entry for June 26, 1841, Heron seemed pleased with the fact that "we had prayers, a new circumstance at Osnaburgh."[233] He also mentioned how the "Indians continue[d] about the Establishment" waiting for the arrival of Mason.[234] Two days later, he was further satisfied by the fact that "all the children belonging to the servants were baptized" by Mason who had also conducted marriages during his short visit at Osnaburgh House.[235] James Heron's journal makes it clear that the Factor appreciated the presence of William Mason at the HBC post and, although Heron was not active in missionary work, he lauded Mason's visit.

The missionary efforts at inland posts such as Osnaburgh House were often characterized by short yearly visits. During the long stretches of time when no ordained

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[229] Heeney, 24.
[230] Bryce, 417.
[231] Ibid, 417.
[232] Bishop, 153.
[233] Osnaburgh Post Journal, 1841-42, HBCA B.155/a/53.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.

person was available to the post, the post manager was often responsible for conducting services that were religious in nature. In 1857, Postmaster William Linklater served as witness to John Sutherland's statement of intention of marriage. It read:

> This is to certify that consequence of the absence of a minister I am obliged to commit to paper my intention of marrying Eliza Crow the very first opportunity that presents itself where the marriage ceremony can be regularly performed by a clergyman of the Church of England.[236]

Since both Sutherland and Crow signed the contract with an "X", it would also be reasonable to assume that Linklater also drafted the temporary marriage license. In 1902, Post Manager Jabez Williams conducted burials when no minister was available.[237] The post was also the main provider of supplies to missionaries who had to travel great distances between the widely dispersed mission centers. Thomas Vincent (a C.M.S. missionary to be discussed in greater detail later) acquired the supplies from Osnaburgh House that he needed to continue his missionary voyage along the Albany River in the summer of 1870; the goods were billed to the Church Mission Society.[238] Osnaburgh House, like other HBC posts, was both directly and indirectly involved in the Christianization of the Osnaburgh Natives. The Company's employees helped missionary efforts when they could, and acted as religious figures during the majority of the year when ordained ministers where unavailable.

As missionary efforts intensified in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the role of the community at Osnaburgh House was reassessed and it became evident that a permanent church needed to be built at the post. Around 1898, a church was constructed

[236] Osnaburgh Miscellaneous Items, HBCA B.155/z/1 fo 421.
[237] Diocese of Keewatin Anglican Mission 1836-1956, Archives of Ontario, MS 217(2) # 6785.
[238] Osnaburgh Miscellaneous Items, HBCA B.155/z/1 fo 434.

at Osnaburgh House, marking the creation of the St. John's Parish (Appendix 3.xvi).[239] However, because it had no permanent minister, there is little known and, therefore, little written about the Church. Although a church was built, most likely under that command and recommendation of Archdeacon Thomas Vincent, it did not have a full-time minister for most of its short history and missionary efforts were restricted to yearly summer visits, just as they had been conducted in the half-century before its construction.[240] The church, severely damaged by arsonist's fire in the 1940s, was rebuilt shortly after its destruction. Sadly, it was left to decay after Osnaburgh House closed in 1963 until the Grace family had it restored in the 1990s (Appendix 3.xvii). Representing the personal faith of the Grace family and the presence of Catholicism near Osnaburgh House, a steeple from a Catholic church from across the lake was acquired to replace the decrepit one at Osnaburgh House (Appendix 3.xviii).

A study of the relationship among the HBC, more specifically Osnaburgh House, missionaries, and local aboriginals, would be incomplete without reference to the life of Thomas Vincent III. The experiences of Thomas Vincent are representative of the great difficulty of conducting missions in Canada's north, and also the adversity experienced by missionaries of mixed blood in the face of a racist Anglican hierarchy. His story further develops the intimate relationship that existed among HBC posts, missionaries, and the Natives peoples.

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[239] Marj Heinrichs and Dianne Hiebert, with the people of Miskeegogamang, *Mishkeegogamang: The Land. the People and the Purpose: The Story of the Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation* (Canada: Freisens Corporation, 2003), 201.
[240] Ibid, 201.

Thomas Vincent III was born on March 1, 1835, at Osnaburgh House, the son of John Vincent, postmaster at Osnaburgh House from 1832-1839.[241] Vincent's grandfather, Thomas Vincent I, was also employed by the HBC as a Factor for both Fort Albany and Moose Factory during the final years of the fur trade rivalry.[242] He had taken a Native wife and John Vincent was one offspring of that mixed marriage. In 1840, John Vincent moved his family to Middle Church, in present-day Manitoba, where young Thomas received a formal European education at the parish school.[243] Thomas Vincent III later attended St. John's Collegiate School and shortly after his graduation was sent to Moose Factory to work as a catechist under Archdeacon Horden (later to become Bishop Horden) in 1855.[244] Vincent continued his work under Horden who, pleased with Vincent's work, recommended him for ordination. Amazingly, late in the winter of 1863, Vincent traveled over two thousand kilometers by snowshoe from Fort Albany on James Bay to the Red River colony to be ordained as a priest in the Church of England.[245] After two decades of missionary work, which included yearly trips up the Albany River to perform his religious duties, Vincent became Archdeacon of Moose Factory in 1883.[246] He died at Fort Albany in 1907 and his body was subsequently taken by dog sled to Moose Factory to be buried beside his wife.[247] During his years as a missionary, and later as an Archdeacon, Vincent was diligent in his duties, often traveling great distances

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[241] T.C.B. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies: A History of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land and it Dioceses from 1820-1950* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962), 121., HBCA B.155/a/44-50
[242] John S. Long, "Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of "Métis" Racial Status," in *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3 (1983): 97.
[243] Boon, 121.
[244] Ibid, 121.
[245] Ibid, 122.
[246] Long, "Thomas Vincent," 97.
[247] Ibid, 97.

to conduct religious services.[248] However, geography was not the only obstacle faced by Vincent.

Although Thomas Vincent was able to rise to the status of Archdeacon in the Church of England, his racial status, since he had mixed blood, prevented him from becoming Bishop, a position he had much desired. John S. Long, in his study *Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of "Métis" Racial Status*, outlined the fundamental issue with Vincent's struggle. He wrote:

> Through its policy of Native Agency, The Church Missionary Society sought to further the rapid spreading of Christianity through the non-Christian world. The Society's European agents were supposed to be mere catalysts who would soon be replaced by Native Agents. Mission centers were intended to become self-supporting so that society funds could be transferred elsewhere. The Case of Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee illustrates one of the difficulties of implementing these policies in the James Bay region, where men of mixed raced were considered unfit to succeed their European tutors.[249]

The election of Vincent to the position of Bishop would have been justified. He was an extremely devout man who had the many advantages of being "country-born."[250] While on a short visit to England, Vincent discussed the value of country born agents with Church Missionary Society member, Christopher Fenn. Vincent argued that agents who were born in Canada and were of native descent made better missionaries because they were accustomed to the climatic and geographic difficulties of the Canadian north, which would, therefore, allow them to live on smaller salaries. [251] He further added that "country-born" missionaries were regarded as "fellow countrymen" amongst Native

[248] Ibid, 102.
[249] Long, "Thomas Vincent," 95.
[250] Ibid, 104.
[251] Ibid, 104.

populations.[252] It was exactly these reasons that led Bishop John Horden to say that with Vincent, "a better appointment could not have been made."[253]

Furthermore, Vincent's peers in the church commented on the steadfastness of Vincent. Bishop David Anderson of the Diocese of Rupert's Land commented on Vincent's diligence in his published journal *The Net in the Bay*. It read:

> Mr. Thomas Vincent was admitted to Deacon's orders- a service of no little interest to Mr. Horden and myself…Mr. Vincent had been carefully prepared for ordination by Mr. Horden, and had given proof of steadiness and zeal. He had been for a time at Rupert's House, and was now to be sent to Albany to take Mr. Fleming's place. It was a pleasure for me to set him apart for the ministry, having known him almost from boyhood.[254]

Anderson's words demonstrate the dedication. Vincent's own words help to further display this quality.

> I built this church many years ago. It is a wooden building, strongly spiked together with long iron nails. Our timber, however, is not very durable….I had no one to help me but one young lad…We raised this heavy building by means of wedges to the height I wanted, removed all the decayed timber and replaced it with good solid lumber. I spent the great part of two months over it. It was hard, hard work for me, but I have the satisfaction of knowing that my church is good for another twenty years, should no accident happen to it. While engaged in this heavy work we still conducted our daily services and other meetings. At the usual time day-school opened and we kept all our mission work moving. I wish often that we were nearer than we are to the four churches I am trying to get built. I am 210 miles from the nearest one and 550 miles from the furthest.[255]

However, when it came time for Horden to recommend his successor as Bishop, he retracted his former position and expressed his desire for a man of European descent.[256] Concerning the promotion of Vincent, Horden felt "in his present position he does very

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[252] Ibid, 104.
[253] John Horden, quoted in Rev. Jacob Anderson and The Ven. Archdeacon Faries, "Thomas Vincent," in *Leaders of the Canadian Church, 2nd series*, ed. Wm. Bertal Heeney (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Limited, 1920), 94.
[254] Bishop David Anderson, quoted in, Boon, 121.
[255] Archdeacon Thomas Vincent, quoted in, Boon, 145-146.
[256] Long, "Thomas Vincent," 107.

well, but he is not qualified for a higher one."[257] This decision was based more on Vincent's interaction with the few white parishioners in the region rather than with the majority Native population. According to John S. Long, "in all the praises written of Thomas Vincent, there is the unwritten assumption that his station in life was as a missionary to Native congregations, and his fate was predetermined by his racial background."[258] Horden eventually appointed as his successor J.A. Newnham of Montreal who became Bishop of the Moosonee district on April 15, 1893, four months after the sudden death of Bishop Horden.[259]

Some controversy exists over the competence of Newnham. T.C.B. Boon suggests he quickly adapted to life in Canada's north and "was able to conduct all the Indian services, preach and administer the Holy Communion in the Cree tongue, within four months of beginning to learn to read it."[260] However, John S. Long suggests Newnham had several handicaps. Long argues Newnham's unfamiliarity with the regional characteristics of the climate and people limited his abilities as a Bishop.[261] Furthermore, because of the untimely death of Bishop Horden, he did not receive the proper training needed to take control of the diocese.[262] Long presents Thomas Vincent as being significantly more qualified for the position of Bishop than Newnham. Although Vincent resented the appointment of Newnham as Bishop, he continued his missionary work until his retirement in 1900.[263] There were some pragmatic reasons for the appointment of Newnham over Vincent, the most important of which was the

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[257] John Horden, quoted in Long, "Thomas Vincent," 104.
[258] Ibid, 110.
[259] Boon, 138.
[260] Ibid, 136-137.
[261] Long, "Thomas Vincent," 107.
[262] Ibid, 107.
[263] Ibid, 108, 110.

unwillingness of white parishioners in Canada to accept a man of Native blood as their minister.[264] The experience of Thomas Vincent demonstrates the nearsightedness of the Church Missionary Society, which claimed it wanted to build a self-sufficient Native Agency in Canada but was unwilling to accept a man of mixed blood as Bishop.

Events at Osnaburgh House mirror the broader scope of the relationship between Natives and their 'Christianizers' in the HBC and in Canadian history. In fact, the life of Thomas Vincent III echoes both the selfless work of many missionaries and the less-than noble racism that is inherent in the historic relationships between whites and Natives. It is significant to note that Thomas Vincent III was born at Osnaburgh House, carried out his missionary duties in the HBC posts along the Albany River system, died at Fort Albany, and is buried next to his wife at Moose Factory. His birth, life, mission, death, and burial are all characterized by their relationship with the HBC post. The life of Thomas Vincent III further underscores the role played by seemingly minor characters in remote areas and how they are representative of the broader themes of Canadian history.

The HBC post was a central meeting place for Natives, and one of the few places entire bands could be addressed. Like the missionaries before them, the Government agents who came to the remote northern regions to sign treaties with the local Native populations used HBC posts as the site for their commission. Osnaburgh House was where Treaty Number Nine, also known as the James Bay Treaty, one of the most significant treaties in Canadian history, was first signed. The Hudson's Bay Company played a crucial role in the signing of Native treaties, including Treaty Number Nine. Historian Arthur J. Ray, in his book *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, argues, "the Canadian government wanted the company to act as a peacekeeper and as an

[264] Ibid, 110.

agent of the government in the northwest."[265] A letter written by Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, to HBC Governor, Sir Stafford Northcote in 1781 helps to underscore the importance of the HBC post in the government's efforts to create treaties with First Nations. It reads:

> I am very anxious, indeed, that we should be able to deal with the Indians upon satisfactory terms. They are the great difficulty in these newly civilized countries…The Hudson's Bay Company have dealt with the Indian in a thoroughly satisfactory manner…It would be of advantage to us, & no doubt it would be of advantage to you, that we should be allowed to make use of your officers & your posts for the purpose of making those payments to the Indian which will have to be made annually by the Government of Canada in order to satisfy their claim & keep them in good humour. The Indian had a title to some of these lands which is now extinguished – upon which certain terms which involve annual payments; & it would be of great advantage that we should be able to employ officers who are known to these Indians in order to make these payments & keep the Indians in good humour.[266]

It is important to recognize that signing a treaty would benefit the HBC since the distribution of annuity payments would be made at the post. The HBC was fully aware of the potential advantage that could be gained as the result of government treaties with Canadian aboriginals. This decision helped facilitate the Company's transition into the modern age. According to David Calverley, in his study *The Impact of the Hudson's Bay Company on the Creation of Treaty Number Nine*,

> understanding the HBC's role in the treaty process highlights the continued importance of the Company in Northern Canada, and its effect on treaty creation…the HBC played a ubiquitous role. In doing so the Company affected both the process and the substance of the treaty in an effort to protect and solidify its position as the pre-eminent fur trading company in the north.[267]

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[265] Ray, "Industrial Age," 4.
[266] Sir John A. MacDonald, quoted in, Ray, "Industrial Age," 4-5.
[267] David Calverley, "The Impact of the Hudson's Bay Company on the creation of Treaty Number Nine," in *Ontario History* 98 (Spring 2006): 30.

An analysis of specific elements of the James Bay Treaty and its signing demonstrates the importance of Osnaburgh House and other HBC posts in the process.

A number of factors defined the way in which the HBC affected the process whereby Treaty Number Nine was signed. Firstly, the HBC provided the commissioners with the means of transportation, notably the Native guides, without whom the commissioners would not have been able to travel to the remote regions.[268] One of the Native guides, who went by the name Oombash, also signed Treaty Number Nine with an X at Osnaburgh House.[269] Secondly, HBC employees often acted as translators for the commissioners.[270] Jabez Williams, the Post Manager of Osnaburgh House when the treaty was signed, was one such HBC employee who interpreted for the commissioners.[271] Thirdly, the HBC post employees, "were the northern experts," and provided a great deal of valuable information to the commissioners.[272] Without the information supplied by HBC employees, the treaty process would have been considerably more costly and difficult. The explanation and signing of the treaties, including the landmark Treaty Number Nine, were almost always conducted in HBC posts. Furthermore, the HBC affected the way in which treaties materialized. Most notably was the placement of reserve lands. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the HBC or government officials coerced the Natives into choosing locations for their reserves near the HBC posts, almost every reserve created by Treaty Number Nine is located near a HBC post.[273] This trend is continued throughout Canada. At Osnaburgh

[268] Ibid, 36.
[269] Long, "Treaty Number Nine," 4.
[270] Calverley, 38.
[271] Long, "Treaty Number Nine," 5.
[272] Calverley, 42.
[273] Ibid, 32.

House, the reserve is directly across the lake from the post, within eyesight. The close proximity of the reserves to the HBC posts underscores the important social, cultural, and economic relationship the Natives had with the HBC.[274] Further analysis of the way in which the treaty was created and signed, and how it affected Osnaburgh House and the Mishkeegogamang Nation demonstrates the importance of the James Bay Treaty in the history of Ontario's north. Osnaburgh House is not only typical of treaty making in Ontario, but also represents elements of the greater Canadian experience.

Spanning an area of 582,000 square kilometers, over half of Ontario's surface area, Treaty Number Nine is one of the largest Native treaties in Canada.[275] Despite, or perhaps because of, its great significance, controversy persists over the way in which the treaty was created and explained to the people who signed it. These two factors remain central to the Mishkeegogamang peoples' claim that the treaty was unfair. Although the treaty was between the First Nations and the Canadian and Ontario governments, the Native people were not involved in the negotiation process. The terms of Treaty Number Nine were negotiated solely between the Dominion government of Canada and the Provincial government of Ontario without consulting the Ojibwa and Cree who would eventually sign it.[276] Roy Kaminawaish, a current member of the Mishkeegogamang Nation, reflected on the treaty's signing by saying,

> it wasn't even a negotiation. When you look at the government records of the treaty that the commission brought to Lake St. Joe, it was an already signed document in Ontario and Ottawa. The commissioners were instructed not to change one word in the legal text of the treaty.[277]

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[274] Ibid, 32.
[275] John S. Long, "How the Commissioners explained Treaty Number Nine to the Ojibaway and Cree in 1905," in *Ontario History* 98 (Spring 2006): 2.
[276] Ibid, 3.
[277] Roy Kaminawaish, quoted in, Heinrichs, 118.

The exclusion of a Native voice in the creation of the treaty is one element of Native resentment that still festers.

Furthermore, controversy still exists over the way in which the James Bay Treaty was explained to First Nation peoples, including the Natives at Osnaburgh House. Although the commissioners of the treaty, Duncan Campbell Scott, Samuel Stewart, and D. George MacMartin, none of whom spoke Oji-Cree, found people, often HBC employees, to give an oral translation of the treaty to the Natives, the translators did not travel with the commissioners (Appendix 3.xix).[278] This meant there was no consistent translation of the treaty as the commissioners traveled from post to post to get signatures from the different Natives bands. Furthermore, it is uncertain if the oral explanations given to the Natives were an accurate reflection of the actual terms of the treaty.[279] At the very least, it is clear that the way in which the treaty was understood was different between the Natives who signed it and the governments that created it. The words of John S. Long, from his study, *How the Commissioners Explained Treaty Number Nine to the Ojibway and Cree in 1905*, help to explain the differences in understanding. For the governments of Canada and Ontario, the treaty was

> a legal instrument which sought to remove the impediment of "Indian title" to the land, freeing it for state projects, claiming its indigenous inhabitants as subjects, extending to them some of the responsibilities and benefits and symbols of citizenship, and granting them certain gifts.[280]

[278] Calverley, 38.
[279] Long, "Treaty Number Nine," 1.
[280] Ibid, 1.

For the Natives, "the treaty was an oral covenant acknowledging their continuing need to use the land, and providing them with promises of assistance and protection."[281] The differences in the interpretation of the treaty between the two parties are obvious.

Although Missebay, the Chief of the Band at Osnaburgh House, expressed his concern that the treaty might jeopardize the band's future use of traditional hunting and fishing grounds, D.C. Scott assured him their present source of livelihood would not be affected and that they could continue to live as their ancestors had (Appendix xx).[282] Missebay, recognized by his peers for his wisdom, took the night to discuss the terms of the treaty with his band and returned in the morning saying, according to MacMartin's journal, "Whatever you say we will do."[283] His words suggest they were spoken out of coercion rather than understanding. Heeding the advice of Missebay, the Osnaburgh Band signed Treaty Number Nine. Nine Native men belonging to the Osnaburgh Band, Chief Missebay, Thomas Missebay, George Wahwaashkung, Kwiash, Nahokeesic, Oombash, David Skunk, John Skunk, and Thomas Panacheese, all made their mark with an X.[284] In fact, the majority of men who signed the James Bay Treaty, with the exception of the treaty's commissioners and the relatively few Natives who signed in Cree syllabics, did so with an X.[285] The illiteracy of the signers led some historians, such as John S. Long, to condemn "the commissioner's duplicity in seeking binding signatures on a document that the Ojibwa and Cree could neither read nor understand."[286] Although Missebay, just as the Chiefs of the other bands who signed the treaty, was given a copy of

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[281] Ibid, 1.
[282] Ibid, 11.
[283] Ibid, 12.
[284] The James Bay Treaty: Treaty No. 9 (Made in 1905 and 1906) and Adhesions made in 1929 and 1930 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964), 21-22.
[285] Ibid, 21-25.
[286] Long, "Treaty Number Nine," 18.

Treaty Number Nine, it was not translated into Ojib-Cree syllabics, meaning that band members were forced to learn English if they wished to understand fully the details of a treaty that even lawyers might have trouble comprehending.[287] Despite the lack of proper communication and understanding, the Osnaburgh Band signed the Treaty Number Nine on July 12, 1905, and consummated the event with a great feast (Appendix 3.xxi).[288] In the official reports made by the commissioners, they suggest that the Natives understood the terms of the treaty completely, but, in reality, this was far from true.

A superficial analysis of the treaty and its immediate effect on the Osnaburgh Natives would suggest that its terms were quite generous. However, a closer examination suggests a harsher reality. Although the band retained its right to use their traditional hunting and fishing grounds, this was under the condition that those lands were not needed for settlement, mining, and lumbering ventures that might be conducted by both the provincial and federal governments.[289] Basically, as the actual words of the treaty suggest, the Osnaburgh Natives lost their autonomy over their land. The James Bay Treaty reads: "the said Indians do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the government of the Dominion of Canada, for His Majesty the King and His successors forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands."[290] A reserve was given to the Osnaburgh band, with its size decided by the formula of one square mile per family of five.[291] Although the band understood they maintained their sovereignty on the reserve, the actual autonomy of the reserve was in the hands of the Crown's Canadian government. The treaty states, "the said Reserves when confirmed shall be held and

[287] Ibid, 17.
[288] Ibid, 17.
[289] The James Bay Treaty, 20
[290] Ibid, 19
[291] Ibid, 20.

administered by His Majesty for the benefit of the Indians."[292] The state obtained the right to procure and sell portions of the reserve, a right the Osnaburgh Natives were not granted.[293] In return for the surrender of their land, each Band member was given a present of eight dollars cash and a perpetual annuity of four dollars; arguably a small sum of money for a people who had surrendered ninety-nine percent of their traditional lands.[294] A British flag, the Union Jack, and a copy of the treaty written in English were given to the Chiefs of each band.[295] The presentation of the Union Jack is especially symbolic of the Natives' status as subjects of the British Crown. Natives were also promised educational facilities.[296] However, in 1966 no member of the Osnaburgh Reserve had attended high school.[297] The administration of medical services was also a component of the James Bay Treaty. Dr. A.G. Meindl, a medical doctor who traveled with the commission, gave much needed vaccinations to (mainly) Native women and children, and subsequently yearly visits were made at treaty time by medical personal. However, a permanent medical facility was not established at Osnaburgh until 1949.[298] Although disclaimed by the treaty's commissioners, an analysis of the James Bay Treaty suggests Missebay's fear that his people would lose their autonomy over their lands was indeed realized.

Arguably, it was the HBC that benefited most from the signing of Treaty Number Nine. The benefits were definitely realized at Osnaburgh House. The annuity payments given to the Natives meant hard currency, something that had been virtually non-existent

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[292] Ibid, 20.
[293] Ibid, 20.
[294] The James Bay Treaty, 20, Long, "Treaty Number Nine," 3.
[295] Long, "Treaty Number Nine," 3.
[296] The James Bay Treaty, 21.
[297] Bishop 68.
[298] Bishop, 69.

at HBC posts, became readily available. On July 13, 1905, Jabez Williams, Post Manager at Osnaburgh House, recorded six hundred dollars in cash sales.[299] The following day he recorded another five hundred dollars in sales.[300] The cash was much welcomed at Osnaburgh House since the post, like other HBC posts, was trying to cope with the changing face of the Canadian fur trade. The annuity payments gave the HBC a steady, yearly source of cash income. The use of the post for the distribution of annuity payments and welfare relief not only meant the post would receive more income, but it also strengthened economic ties between Natives and the HBC.[301] The HBC's cooperation with both the provincial and federal governments in the signing of the James Bay Treaty gave hope to some HBC officials they might receive political favors and considerations in the face of the conservationist initiatives that had been initiated by some government agencies.[302] David Calverley argued that C.C. Chipman, the Canadian Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, was "concerned more with fur yields than treaty rights, [and] hoped that a northern treaty might protect Cree and Ojibwas trapping activity, and, by extension, Company trading operations."[303] Therefore, by helping the commissioners get signatures on Treaty Number Nine, the HBC "sought to secure itself a position in the changing political environment of the north."[304] Treaty Number Nine strengthened and further entrenched the relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Native populations of the north.

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[299] Calverley, 41.
[300] Ibid, 41.
[301] Ibid, 33.
[302] Ibid, 33.
[303] Ibid, 33.
[304] Ibid, 31.

The signing of the James Bay Treaty, first at Osnaburgh House, and subsequently at other HBC posts, placed the responsibility of governing Native bands in the hands of the provincial government of Ontario and the federal government of Canada. However, this did not remove the Hudson's Bay Company from the political process. After facilitating the treaty's signing and affecting the location of Native reserves, the HBC continued to play a central role in the social, cultural, and economic lives of the Natives peoples.

At face value, there is seemingly little connection between William Semia Oombash's decision to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.) and the HBC post Osnaburgh House (Appendix 3.xxii).[305] However, definite connections can be made. Firstly, Osnaburgh House, as the center of social and economic activity for the local Native bands, also had the privilege of access to information on the outside world. It is therefore reasonable to assume Oombash received word of the war in Europe either directly or indirectly through Osnaburgh House. He also conducted trade and was a wage laborer at Osnaburgh House before and after the First World War.[306] Furthermore, Treaty Number Nine was first signed in Osnaburgh House eleven years prior to Oombash's enlistment. The special relationship that was created by Treaty Number Nine between the British Crown and the Native Bands of Northern Ontario may have enticed Oombash to enlist. The final connection between Semia Oombash and Osnaburgh House is undoubtedly the greatest. Located directly behind the church at Osnaburgh House lies the remains of Semia Oombash. His headstone is identical to the ones reserved for

[305] His grave stone, located at Osnaburgh House reads Semia Oombash. His attestation paper reads William Semia. For the duration of the paper he will be referred to as Semia Oombash.
[306] National Archives of Canada, RG10, Indian Affairs, Vol, 6771, Reel C-8515, File 452., Osnaburgh Post Journal 1938-39, HBCA B.155/a/99.

official war graves by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (Appendix 3.xxiii, 3.xxiv). His burial in August 1941 is recorded in the books of St. John's Parish located at Osnaburgh House.[307] Although a member of the Cat Lake Band, the parish records list his abode as being Osnaburgh House.[308] As a permanent feature of Osnaburgh House, and now the Old Post and Village, Semia Oombash's story is integral to the post's history of its relationship with the Native Community. An exploration of the Native concept of alliance may help to understand why Oombash enlisted for war. An exploration of his wartime achievements helps to understand the character of the man.

Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, Canadians enlisted with great enthusiasm. Native Canadians were no exception. Over 4,000 status Indians enlisted.[309] Their reasons for enlisting are generally similar to those of other Canadians: lack of employment, adventure, and because their friends were doing so.[310] However, another reason has been given for the disproportionately high number of Native enlistments; the special relationship that had been created by the different aboriginal treaties in Canada between Native peoples and the British Crown. An excerpt from a study conducted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on Native Veterans helps to articulate the complex but noble nature of Native allegiance. It also demonstrates the relatively uniform approach the British Crown and Canadian government took when signing treaties with aboriginals.

> The Aboriginal concept of alliance with the newcomers, begun in what is now central and eastern Canada, was carried into the series of treaties concluded in the Canadian plains after Confederation. Here, too,

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[307] Diocese of Keewatin Anglican Mission 1836-1956, Archives of Ontario, MS 217(2) # 6785.
[308] Ibid.
[309] "Veterans," *Looking Forward, Looking Back*, February 2006, http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg46_e.html#135 (December, 2006).
[310] Ibid.

> Aboriginal protocol was accepted, the agreements were considered to have spiritual significance, and the signing parties spoke of themselves as *reciprocating partners*. [emphasis added] Although the treaties at this time were negotiated by the Canadian state, at every council it was emphasized that Aboriginal peoples were allying with the Great Mother, Queen Victoria, the embodiment of the British Crown, who offered protection and assistance in return for land for settlement…Wartime service for Aboriginal people was a continuation of the alliance, a gift of oneself, one's energies, and one's goods.[311]

Natives therefore regarded their treaties with the Dominion government in a traditional sense. Although Canada's Natives are not a homogeneous group, historically Britain, and later the Canadian government, approached aboriginal treaties and alliances in a consistently similar manner. This is especially true of the Numbered Treaties signed during the half-century after Confederation.[312] Through their treaties, Natives felt they had a special relationship with the Crown. Consequently, aboriginals saw military service, in conflicts that range from the American Revolution to the Korean War, as a fulfillment of the terms of the treaties to which they had agreed. In an article that appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on October 4, 1940, Joseph Dreaver, chief of the Mistawasis Band in Saskatchewan, was quoted to say, "My grandfather signed the…treaty, to which Queen Victoria also put her signature."[313] Although the article was written during the Second World War, Dreaver was a veteran of both world wars. The special relationship he felt he had with the Crown undoubtedly affected his, and his family's (his sons and daughters also enlisted for service), decision to enlist.

Understanding the reasons why the Dreaver family so selflessly enlisted for war may help to understand why Private Semia Oombash, member of the Cat Lake Band and

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[311] Ibid.
[312] Ray, "Industrial Age," 30-49.
[313] "Indians Go On the Warpath This Time Against Nazis," *The Globe and Mail*, October 4, 1940.

employee and fur trader at Osnaburgh House, made a long and difficult trip to Port Arthur (present day Thunder Bay) to enlist in the First World War. Although the relation between Semia Oombash and the Oombash who signed Treaty Number Nine is unclear, they were no doubt relatives to some degree. This deepens the connection between Dreaver's and Oombash's reasons for enlisting for war. If this hypothesis is true, even if only partially, and Semia Oombash went to war because of the special connection he felt he had with the British Crown, it demonstrates how the HBC, and more specifically Osnaburgh House, by facilitating the treaty process, affected the decision of Natives to enlist for war. At the April 9, 2007 rededication of the Vimy Memorial, Queen Elizabeth II, took time during her walkabout to speak with Aboriginal Veterans who were present, a fact that seems to reinforce the special nature of the relationship between the Monarch and Aboriginals.

Semia Oombash's experience in the First World War was extraordinary and yet, at the same time, rather typical. His story can be considered as representative of so many other Native men who enlisted in the C.E.F. In the late fall of 1916, Semia Oombash enlisted.[314] When he arrived for military training, Oombash could only speak in his Native tongue.[315] However, this did not discourage him. After a few months of training, Oombash was considered one of the best recruits in the battalion and often led platoon drills.[316] Upon arrival in England, he was transferred to the 52nd Battalion and began active duty.[317] Oombash was involved in the infamous battle at Passchendaele and was

[314] National Archives of Canada, RG10, Indian Affairs, Vol, 6771, Reel C-8515, File 452.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.
[317] Ibid.

severely wounded shortly after the battle.[318] In Indian Affairs correspondence, Oombash described his experience, "Passchendaele battle pretty bad fight but me not get hurt. Few days after me get very bad wound with shrapnel."[319] However, his injuries did not change his opinion of the war. In fact, when he returned to Canada, he proclaimed proudly, "Next war me form 1st Battalion, First Contingent."[320] Although some sources have listed Oombash as enlisting in the Second World War as well, there is no irrefutable evidence for this.[321] Oombash returned from WWI and resumed his work for the Hudson's Bay Company at Osnaburgh House, working on a steam ship for the sum of thirty dollars a month.[322] He remained in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company until his death. His burial at the post signifies the level of connection he had with Osnaburgh House. As one of the few gravesites with a permanent engraved headstone in the cemetery behind St. John's Church at Osnaburgh House, Semia Oombash's grave is unique. However, he is only one of the hundreds of Native people who were buried at Osnaburgh House. Furthermore, his time spent as a soldier, during which he served with distinction, is characteristic of so many Native men and women who answered the call of King and Country during the time of war. His story, and others like his, although sometimes anecdotal, helps to ensure his sacrifices, and the sacrifices of his brethren, were not in vain.

Osnaburgh House was similar to other HBC posts because it was the center of the social and economic life of the neighboring Natives bands. Although the goods traded to

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[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.
[321] His death in 1941, noted in the records of St. John's Parish at Osnaburgh House, which lists his abode as Osnaburgh House, suggests that he did not. Diocese of Keewatin Anglican Mission 1836-1956, Archives of Ontario, MS 217(2) # 6785.
[322] National Archives of Canada, RG10, Indian Affairs, Vol, 6771, Reel C-8515, File 452.

Natives at Osnaburgh House introduced Native groups to the benefits of the industrial age, they did so at the cost of the Native's social and economic autonomy. Because the post was a center for Native activity, missionaries used HBC posts such as Osnaburgh House to conduct their missions. Although the Church Mission Society initiated a policy of Native Agency, the trials of Thomas Vincent III, a man whose entire life was lived in a HBC post, demonstrates the difficulties men of mixed blood experienced in the face of a racist Anglican hierarchy. Following in the footsteps of the missionaries, the commissioners of Treaty Number Nine also recognized the value of the posts as a central meeting place for Natives. The signings of the James Bay Treaty were all conducted in HBC posts. Furthermore, the facilitation of the treaty signing process helped ease the HBC's, and Osnaburgh House's, transition into modern age. The link between the aboriginal groups and the British Crown has often been given as reason for the enlistment of Natives soldiers. It is not unreasonable to assume that this also affected Semia Oombash's, whose relative had put his X on Treaty Number Nine, decision to enlist in the in the C.E.F. His gravesite, located in the cemetery behind the church at Osnaburgh House, is one of the few marked graves of the hundreds at the site. His military headstone serves of a reminder of his patriotism and sense of loyalty to the relationship created by the James Bay Treaty. On July 12, 2005, The Old Post and Village hosted the hundredth anniversary of the Treaties signing. Native people from the furthest reaches of Treaty Number Nine came to the Old Post to join in the celebrations, thereby emphasizing the continued importance of Osnaburgh House to the Native community of Northern Ontario.

Conclusion

After Highway 599 was completed it did not take long, nine years to be exact, for Osnaburgh House to close. Although the Hudson's Bay Company did not abandon the area completely, the Company's role as fur traders diminished. For just over twenty years, from 1963 to 1986, the site at Osnaburgh House was left to decay. However, two hundred years after its original establishment in 1786, John and Wendy Grace bought the property with the goal of building a premier fishing resort. Today, after twenty years of operation, their dreams have materialized. However, the Old Post and Village is more than just a fishing camp. Due to the hard work of the Grace family, both the Company store and St. John's Parish church have been restored as close to their original state as possible. The Old Post is, therefore, a sort of living museum of a vibrant part of Canada's past. A trip to the Old Post and Village is like a trip back in time. Just as the history of Osnaburgh House is representative of the some of the greater themes in Canadian history – the fur trade rivalry, the evolution of transportation, and the HBC and Canada's relationships with aboriginals – the Old Post and Village is an accurate depiction of the economic realities of northern Canada today. After the fur trade and mining ventures lost their importance, tourism became one the largest industries in remote communities such as Pickle Lake. Although the history of Osnaburgh House has a certain marketing value, the Grace family has worked diligently over the past two decades to ensure that the Post's place in the history of Northern Canada, which is so intimately linked with the history of the Miskeegogamang First Nation, is preserved rather than exploited.

Appendix One
Maps

Appendix 1.i

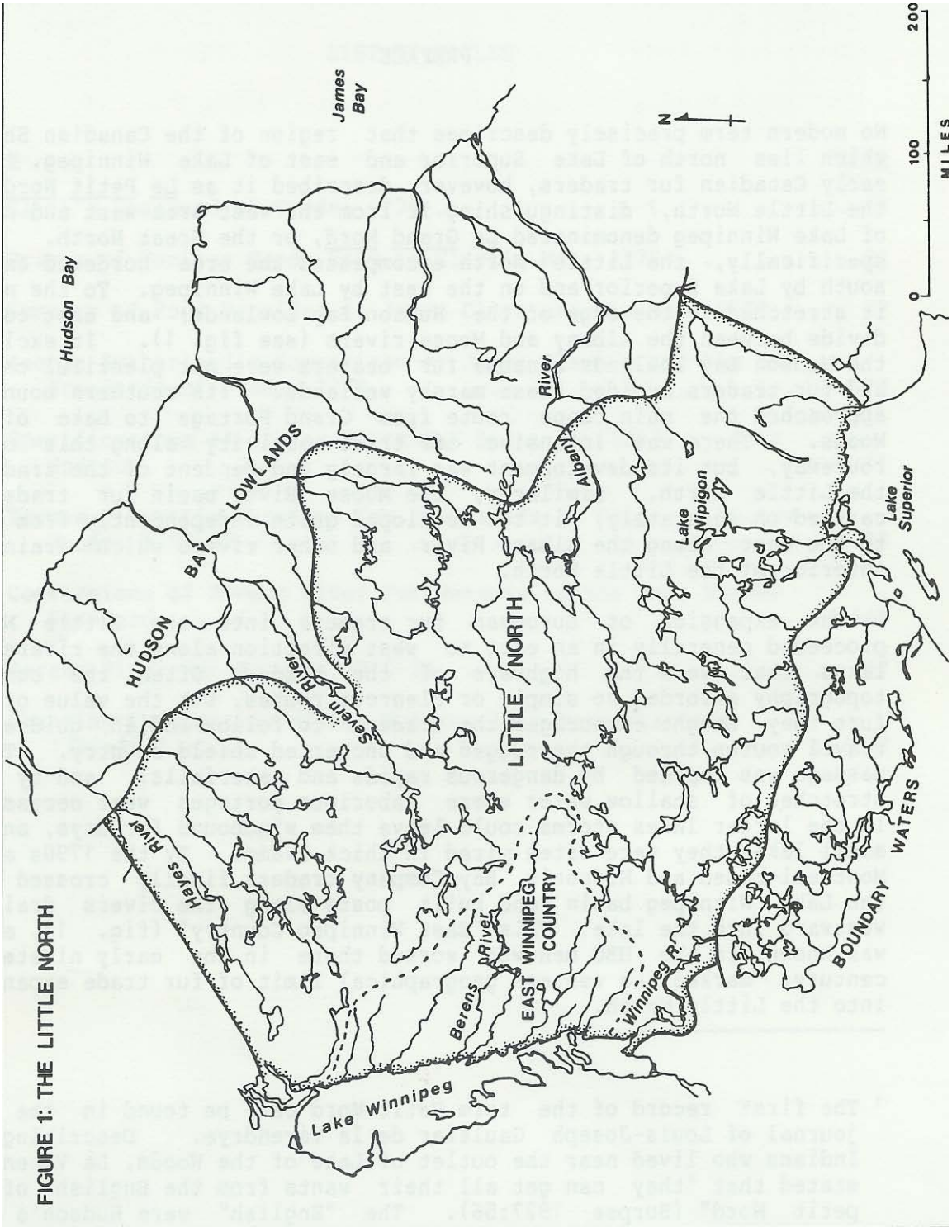
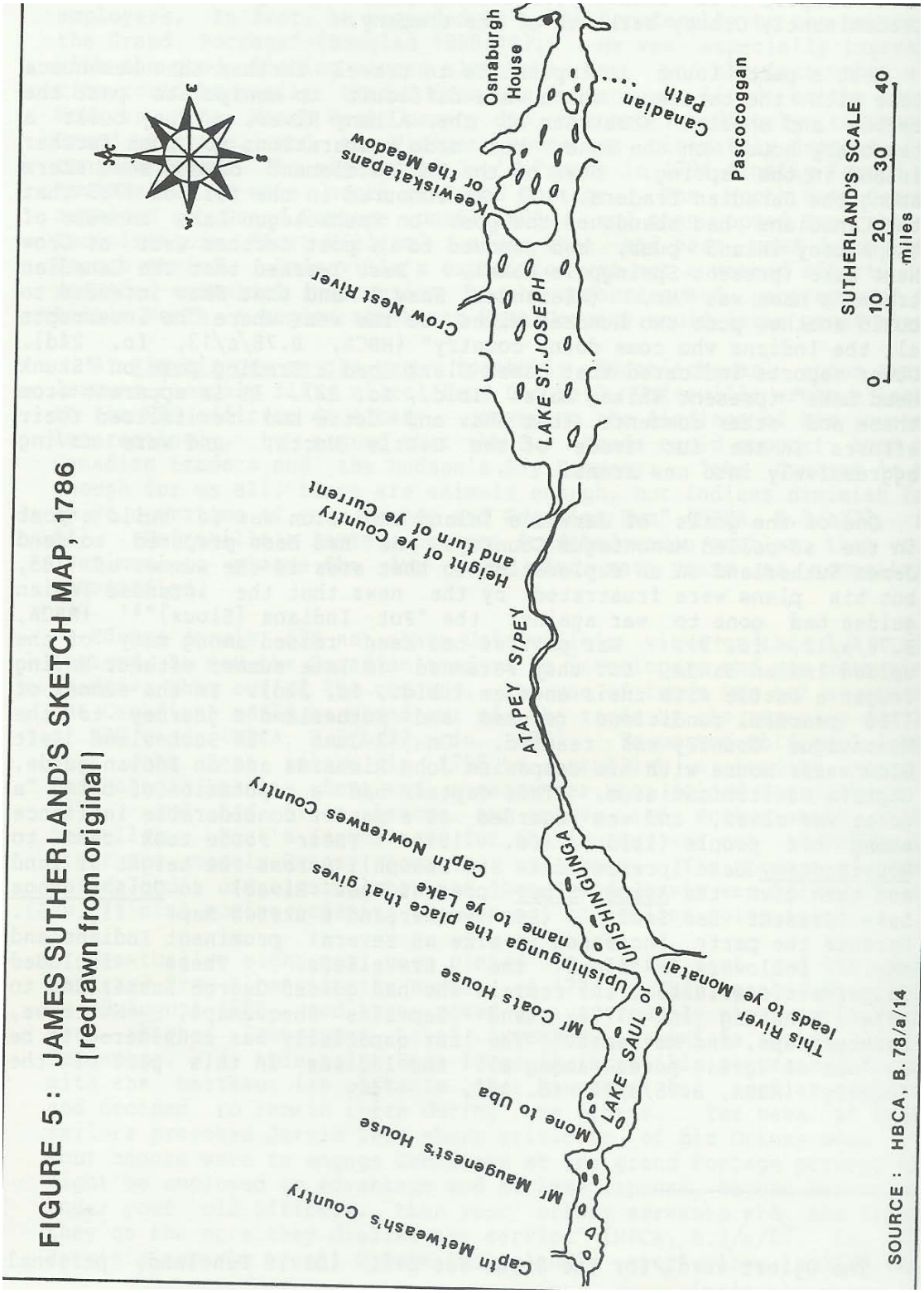


FIGURE 1: THE LITTLE NORTH

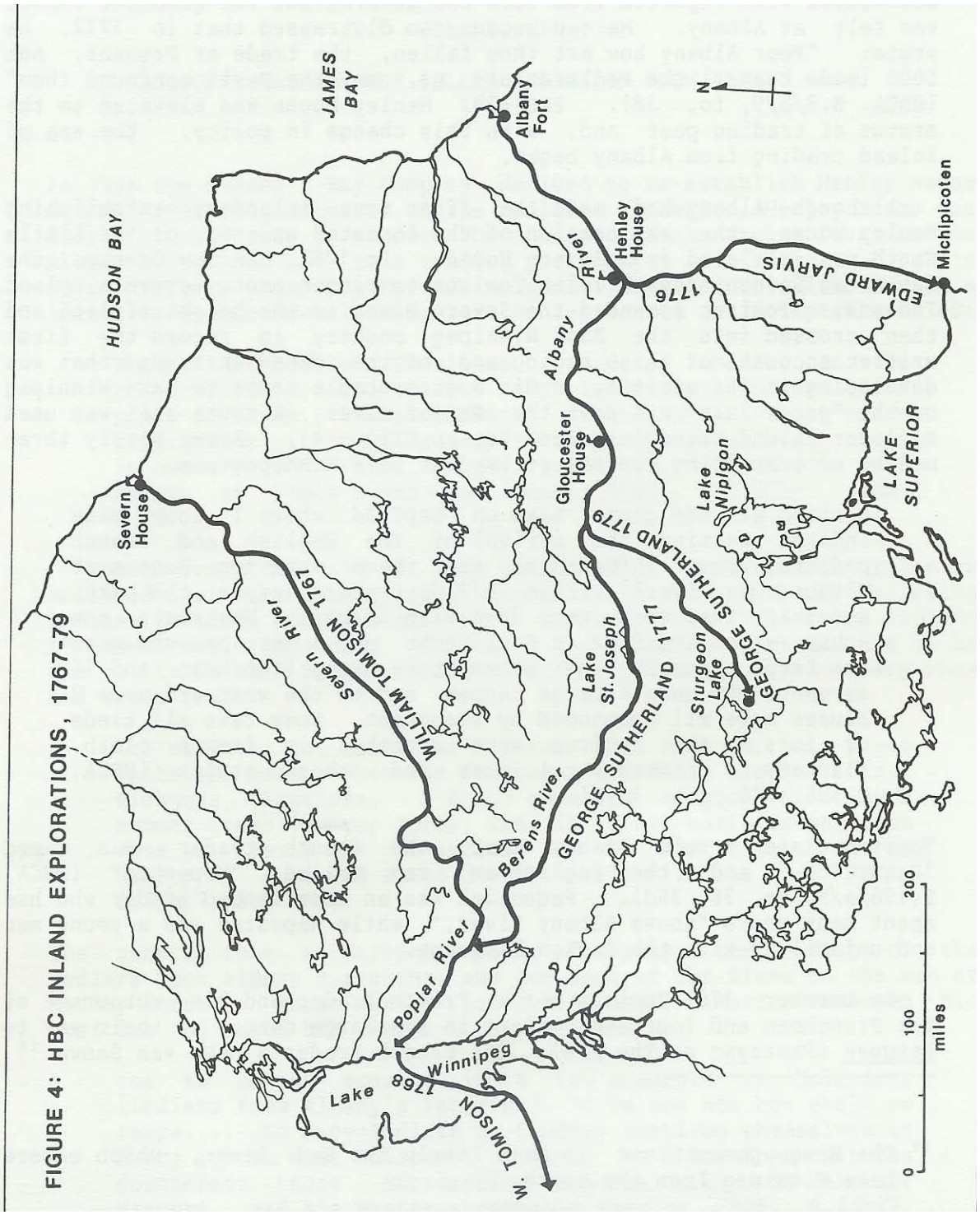
Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North*, ii.

Appendix 1.ii



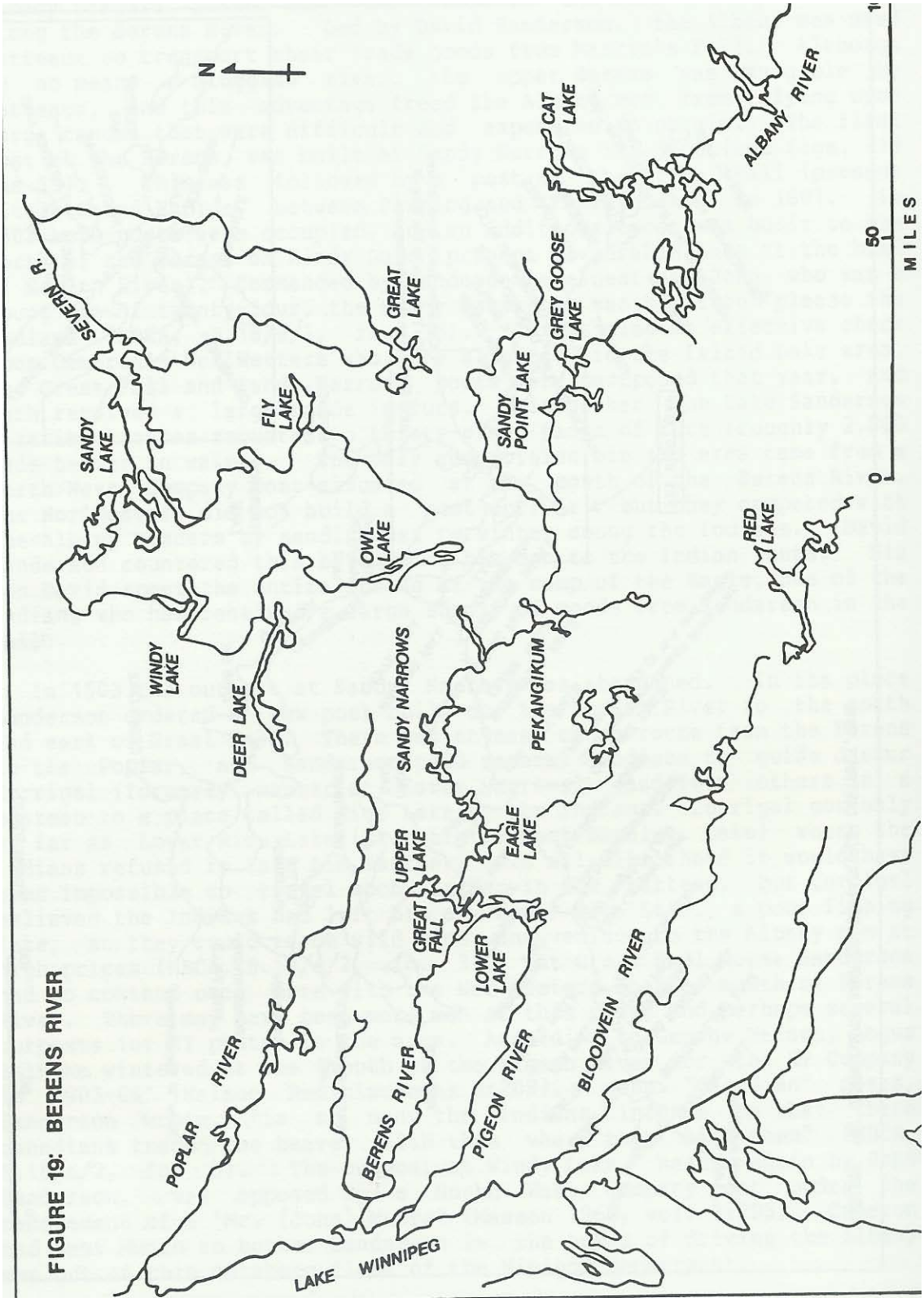
Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North*, 52.

Appendix 1.iii



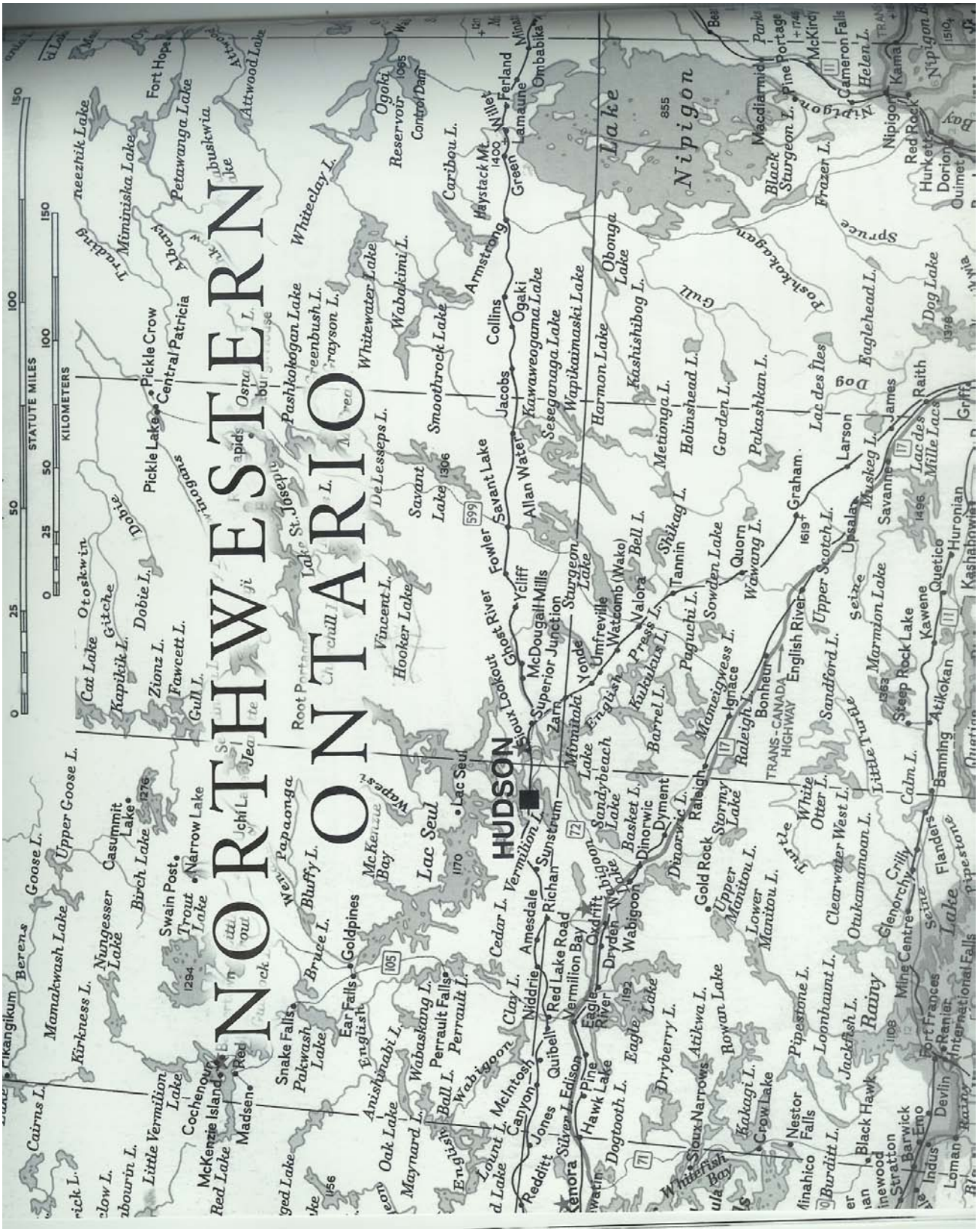
Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North*, 26.

Appendix 1.iv



Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North*, 106.

Appendix 1.v



Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 12.

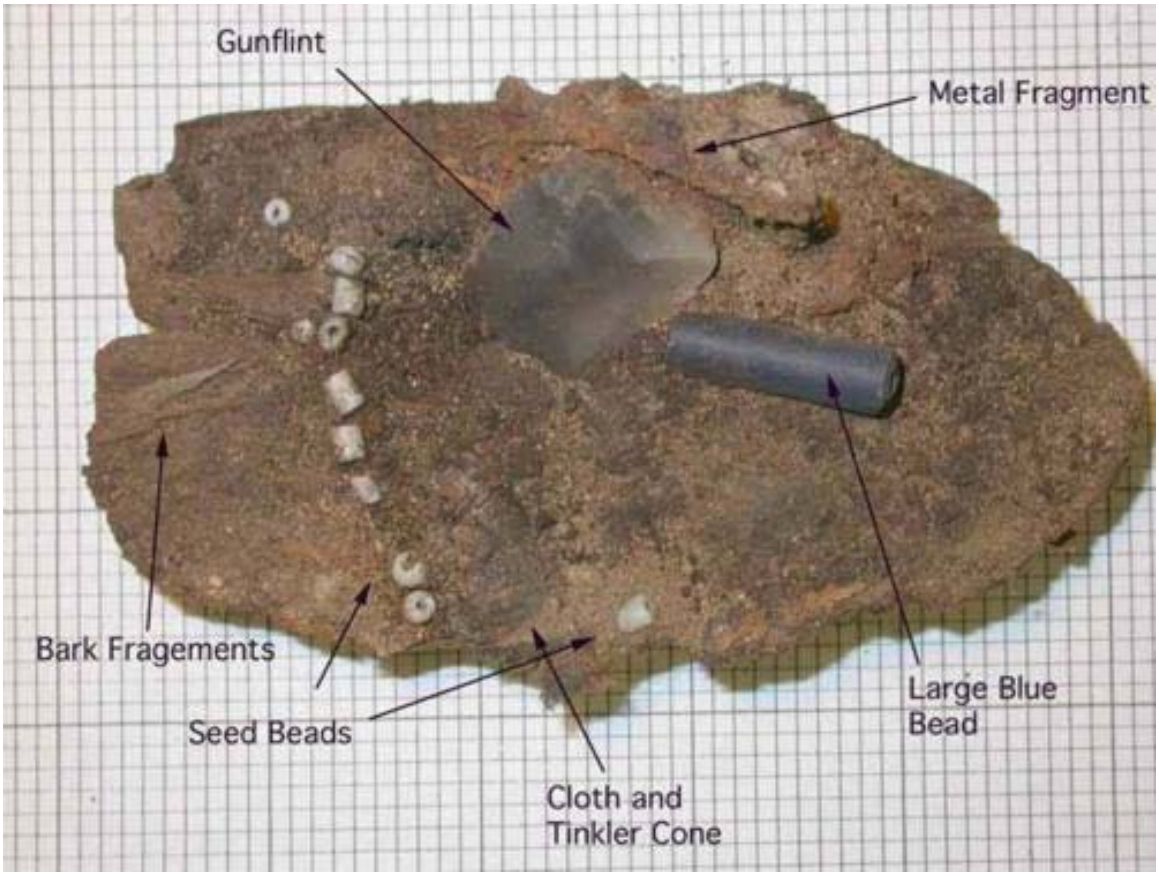
APPENDIX TWO

OLD POST AND VILLAGE ARTIFACTS

Appendix 2.i

Tinkler Cones
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.ii



Analysis of Burial Bundle by William Ross
Excavated at Old Post and Village, August 27, 2002

Appendix 2.iii

Trading Medallion
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.iv

Jew’s or Jaw’s Harp
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.v

Triggers from Rifles
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.vi

Shot
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.vii

Trading Pot
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Fragment of Trading Pot
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.viii

Trade Axes
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.ix

Steel for starting fire
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.x

Lighter
Old Post and Village Artifacts

Appendix 2.xi

HBC Brand Tobacco
Old Post and Village Artifacts

APPENDIX THREE

PHOTOGRAPHS

Appendix 3.i

York boat, Split Lake, Northern Manitoba, 1928.
R.A. Talbot

HBCA 1987/363-Y-2/65
Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Canada

Appendix 3.ii

York boat under sail near Norway House, Manitoba, 1913.
R.A. Talbot

HBCA 197/363-Y-2/56
Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Canada.

Appendix 3.iii

Scows loaded with 500 tons of freight leave for Berens River at the end of the 1934 trading season.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 30.

Appendix 3.iv

After crossing three marine portages, the Root River Scow navigates a narrow waterway.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario,* 40.

Appendix 3.v

Native “bull gangs” unload freight at Doghole Bay.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 45.

Appendix 3.vi

One of Patricia's Scows under construction.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 38.

Appendix 3.vii

Flour Portage on the Root River.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 43.

Appendix 3.viii

Swamped Scow.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 46.

Appendix 3.ix

This Caterpillar tractor hauled 37 tons of freight through snow that was at times 4 ½ feet deep.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 52.

Appendix 3.x

Driver navigates through dangerous slush conditions on Lac Seul in 1934.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 62.

Appendix 3.xi

“Diver Joe Bernier of Hudson about to retrieve a sunken tractor.”

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 66.

Appendix 3.xii

Hudson's Bay Company Post with Indian Treaty Party Planes.
Osnaburgh House, Ontario.

HBCA 1981/28/740
Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Canada.

Appendix 3.xiii

An 11-ton transformer is moved down a creek toward Root Portage.

Wish, *Goldfields of Northwestern Ontario*, 125.

Appendix 3.xiv

“This point was flooded and the post moved to another point in Lake St. Joseph when the dam was built in 1936.” Photographed ca 1914.

HBCA 1987/363-O-7/1
Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Canada.

Appendix 3.xv

Post after it was moved.

Personal collection of John and Wendy Grace, owners, Old Post and Village

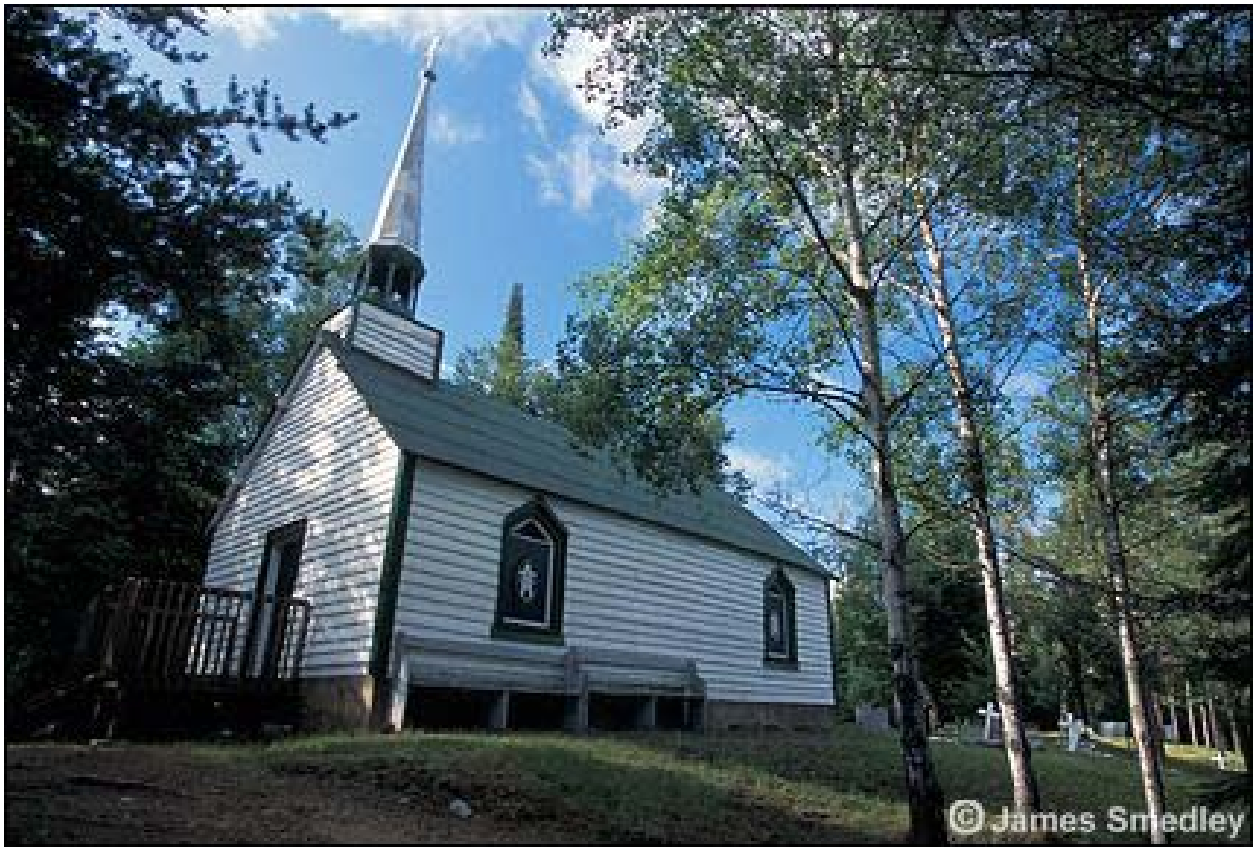
Appendix 3.xvi

(Canon) Father Sanderson ca. 1920.
Personal collection of John and Wendy Grace, owners, Old Post and Village.

Appendix 3.xvii

St. John's Parish Church before restoration.
Personal collection of John and Wendy Grace, owners, Old Post and Village.

Appendix 3.xviii



St. John's Parish Church after restoration.
Personal collection of John and Wendy Grace, owners, Old Post and Village.

Appendix 3.xix

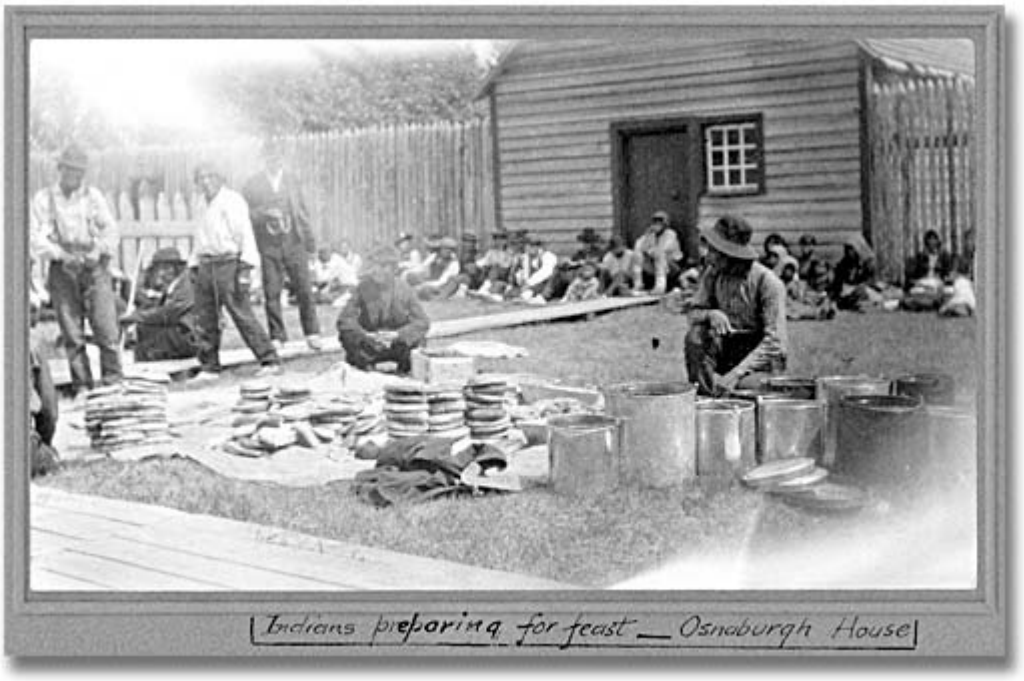
The James Bay Treaty signing party at Fort Albany.
Standing: Joseph L. Vanasse (L), James Parkinson (R) of NWMP.
Seated: Commissioners Samuel Stewart (L), Daniel George MacMartin, Duncan Campbell Scott (R)
Foreground: HBC Chief Trader Thomas, August 3, 1905
Photographer unknown
Duncan Campbell Scott fonds
Black and white print
Reference Code: C 275-2-0-1 (S 7546)
Archives of Ontario, I0010627

Appendix 3.xx

Blind Chief Missabay, making a speech at Osnaburgh ca 1905.

Archives of Ontario. C 275-1-0-2-S7600

Appendix 3.xxi



Preparing the feast to be held after the James Bay Treaty signing ceremony.
Osnaburgh House, July 12, 1905.
Photographer unknown.
Duncan Campbell fonds.
Black and white print
Reference Code: C 275-1-0-2 (S7518)
Archives of Ontario, 10010715

Appendix 3.xxii

“William Semia spoke no English when he joined the 52nd Battalion. He learned the language from another Aboriginal volunteer and later used it to drill platoons.”

National Archives of Canada. C-68913

Appendix 3.xxiii

Semia Oombash's Gravesite.
Personal collection of John and Wendy Grace, owners, Old Post and Village.

Appendix 3.xxiv

Semia Oombash's headstone.
Personal collection of John and Wendy Grace, owners, Old Post and Village.

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