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MAPPING THE INTERIOR PLAINS OF RUPERT'S LAND BY THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY TO 1870

RICHARD I. RUGGLES

By royal charter, Charles II in 1670 granted to a small coterie of London entrepreneurs, united in a joint stock company, exclusive trading privileges in a vast territory of then unknown dimensions. The group was the "Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay," the Hudson's Bay Company. The territory was Rupert's Land, named for Prince Rupert, cousin of the monarch, who graciously consented to act as the first governor of the company. By charter, Rupert's Land included "all the Landes Countryes and Territoryes upon the Coastes and Confynes of the Seas" lying within Hudson Strait, that is, the area drained by waters flowing into Hudson and James bays and Hudson Strait.

The new enterprise erected trading factories at the mouths of several of the large rivers, Rupert, Moose, Albany, and Nelson-Hayes, and

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established a trading system based on the annual journeying of Indian customers to these export posts. The executive committee of Hudson's Bay Company urged employees to accompany Indian groups inland from the factories at the bay shore to winter among the tribes and to encourage them at river break-up time to return to the factories with their furs and other trade items. Not only would this policy allow the company winterers to recruit customers, but it would also develop a cadre of experienced travelers. For many years, no one accepted this challenge, except for Henry Kelsey—a young scamp to some, a young hero to others—who undertook a lone journey onto the Saskatchewan plains between 1690 and 1692.

Kelsey, who eventually became a senior trader in the company, operating mainly out of the York and Churchill factories, was certainly the company's first winterer and the first European to journey onto the northern plains of North America. Regrettably, he did not draw a map depicting his route or the extent of his penetration of the plains. Therefore, there is no cartographic memorial to the commencement of the Hudson's Bay Company's long involvement with the Canadian western interior. After

Kelsey's voyage, the vast region was not intruded upon again by British traders for over sixty years. For some thirty years, the company was deeply embroiled in defending the Hudson and James Bay littoral against incursion by the French, whose forces occupied several of the chief Hudson's Bay Company factories during Anglo-French wars. The company's explorers struggled to extend their knowledge of the northwest shore of Hudson Bay, investigating inlets for a possible opening to a Northwest Passage. Success in this venture could give the company great advantage in the extension of trade. Forays onto the plains by wintering company employees were not resumed until 1754, when Anthony Henday reached nearly to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Perennial occupation of the Great Plains, with the erection of trading houses and the posting of complements of officers and servants, was not initiated until 1774.

Hudson's Bay Company mapping of the plains began in 1755, when Anthony Henday arrived back at York Fort with a party of Plains Indians. Henday had made a sketch of his river and overland track to within sight of the Rockies, and he turned it over to his immediate superior. The company terminated its cartographic endeavors in 1870, when it surrendered its territorial rights to Rupert's Land to the British crown.

RUPERT'S LAND

The region concerned in this analysis is that of the Great Plains lying essentially within Rupert's Land. More specifically, it is the drainage basin of the Nelson River, comprising in the plains the Saskatchewan and the Red-Assiniboine river networks; Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Winnipegosis and associated lesser lakes; and a small part of the upper Churchill River basin, especially the Beaver River valley. A few maps, however, depicted territory beyond Rupert's Land: to the north into the Mackenzie watershed, and to the south into the Missouri. The vast domain is almost eight hundred miles wide along the

international border but tapers toward the Mackenzie basin. From the higher, more dissected tracts to the southwest and west, the plains slope north to the Arctic, northeast to the Laurentian Shield, and east to the extensive flat lowlands of the large lakes of Manitoba. Although many of the earlier commentators were overawed by the immensity and levelness of the vistas that confronted them, the plains are more commonly undulating to rolling in form, rising into hills. The few hundreds of feet of relief occasioned by river valley wall or hill front were sufficiently salient to attract the traveler's attention, especially because they were often more wooded than the level ground.

Early occupancy of the Rupert's Land plains was mainly in the crescent of boreal-mixed forest and aspen grove parkland that frames the grassland core of the plains. This more wooded, transitional zone was the paramount habitat of the beaver and other main peltry of the fur trade. Even though some earlier explorers and traders penetrated the open plains, more frequent passage into the drier grasslands did not prevail until the nineteenth century. Cumberland, the company's first post on the forested plains, was erected in 1774, and the first establishment in the park belt, Hudson House, followed in 1780, but it was not until 1800 that the first grasslands fort, Chesterfield House, was built, far out at the junction of the South Saskatchewan with the Red Deer River.

MAPS AS BUSINESS RECORDS

The Hudson's Bay Company used maps, charts, and plans for business purposes from the inception of its activities in 1670. Of the company's total archival holdings, which would have amounted to about 4,800 items if all were still available, the most significant for cartography are approximately 800 manuscript maps and charts prepared from 1670 to 1870.¹ Two-thirds are still extant in the collection; a one-third attrition has occurred.² In addition, there are some 557 segmental sketches of certain waterways in the journals of two of the company cartographers, Peter Fidler and George

Taylor, Jr. In all, 160 men have been identified as having been involved, among them about 50 Indian and Inuit persons.³

The mapping of the plains represented only a small segment of the total cartographic effort of the company, whose maps flowed into Hudson's Bay House in London from sea to sea, and from northern California to the Arctic archipelago. From 1755 to 1870 about ninety maps were drafted that delineated some portion or all of the interior plains—about 11 percent of the manuscript total. Of these, one-quarter have not survived in the archives of the company. During this period, several hundred segmental sketches of western waterways were produced, involving at least thirty-three persons, among whom were seven Plains Indians named as primary informants and providers of original sketches. Few of the exploration maps concerned only the plains area. Most were of the forest and park belt, and extend across into the Laurentian Shield. Only a small number were focused on the grasslands and the plains alone.

Visitors to Hudson's Bay House in London during these years could not have viewed a busy map-drafting office nor discussed maps with a chief company cartographer, for neither of these existed. Nevertheless, the company was map-conscious. From the beginning of operations, officials proclaimed the necessity of encouraging employees to travel inland and of hiring individuals who had the ability to observe and record. Such persons were even more valuable if they could use instruments to measure distance and direction and to determine their astronomical location, especially if they could also sketch, or compile a map and draft it. The company also hired young apprentices who had been trained in mathematical classes at Christ's Hospital and Grey Coat Hospital in London, and who, in their marine service, or as explorer-surveyors, such as David Thompson, could prepare maps for the use of the factors and the executive committee in England.⁴

In 1778, the company hired a full-time inland surveyor, Philip Turnor, but once his major tasks were completed, he was turned increasingly to trading duties. The head office

did not establish and maintain in the field a surveying-drafting section. If they had, and if they had appointed outstanding young men to such posts, undoubtedly the company could have kept Thompson in its employ. Instead, the geographers had to subordinate their map-making interests to the regular duties of clerks and traders. Thompson, probably one of the greatest practical geographers of all time, left the Hudson's Bay Company for the North West Company in 1797 and stayed with the rival group until he retired to Montreal in 1812. The larger number of company personnel involved in cartography had not originally come to North America to make measurements, to engage in geographical investigations, or to map; nevertheless, they became entailed in such pursuits in the course of their various careers with the Hudson's Bay Company.

The executive committee of the company persistently requested that sketches, charts, drafts, plans, and maps be sent by the factors back to the main office in London for the use of company officials. They were examined there when the packets of official correspondence from the chief factors in America were opened and the letters, journals, and reports were read and discussed at executive committee meetings. Usually maps were commented upon for their usefulness or their inadequacies. The company requested maps for a variety of purposes. On the east and west coasts, they needed charts for sea navigation and coastal and river-mouth charts. Inland, the main concern was to be able to visualize the details of river and lake networks; their interconnections; their relationship to major terrain features; hazards due to waterfalls and rapids; the numbers, locations, and difficulties of portages; and the locations of company posts and those of their competitors.

The major role of maps was to provide locations and other spatial information for company officers who were developing trading strategy, transport routing, and an understanding of their entire territory. Officials requested post layouts, the characteristics of fur post locales, and the pattern of land use on their properties. The officers also expected district

masters to provide maps of their regions, but not all of them were adept enough at mapping to do this, and some ignored the directive. Some maps were made for special purposes—for example, those that indicated property holdings, such as in the Red River settlement, or a map that delineated the route of a proposed telegraph line across the plains.

Exploration and mapping under the conditions prevailing on the plains in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could not be portrayed as a lighthearted occupation. Hunger, or near-starvation, was a present specter. Miserable weather conditions made traveling and camping disagreeable and often dangerous. There was the risk of being overtaken by summer fires, both in the forest and out on the grasslands. Mosquitoes and black flies in the still forests, away from clearing breezes, were the bane of existence.

The specific problems and exigencies of field observation were manifold. Instruments were lost or left behind, were broken, could not be properly calibrated, or had not reached the explorer in time because of the great distances from London or from the Bayside port. Delicate instruments were difficult to transport, and were especially at risk during loading or unloading from canoes and boats; while packed on horses, dogs, or sleds; and during transport across rocky portages. Dangerous to life, as well as to instruments, was the overturning of canoes in storms, stoving in on rocks, and spilling in white water. Such mishaps could lose an observer's vital sextant or compass, or wash away his sketch or records. Low temperatures affected observers on the plains in many ways and caused special problems with the use of instruments. Holding metal instruments and putting them to the eye could incur pain and injury at extreme temperatures. Quite often, intense cold caused the liquid in bulbs and tubes to expand and burst the glass. Grey, overcast skies, dense clouds, or the "smoky exhalations" of grass or forest fires often obscured the view of sun, moon, or stars.

Slow transportation led to serious delays in field observation. The waiting period between the breakage or loss of a vital instrument and

its replacement could extend to two years. Ships normally left London in late May or early June, arrived at Bay ports in late August or early September, and turned around as quickly as possible to avoid being caught in the forming ice cover. Equipment losses had to be reported to York or another factory to await the early autumn ship, which would return the following spring. Even the time that elapsed between the executive committee's request for a map and its receipt, without any other form of delay or evasion, was lengthy.

As could be expected, the larger share of Hudson's Bay Company maps of the interior plains—two-thirds—were exploratory sketches of river and lake networks. Most were simple in drafting style, with black india ink line work, or with grey ink wash to outline waterways. Little color was used; one or two colored inks or color washes might have been added. These maps were rarely ornamental, and only a few cartographers used a decorative cartouche. Legends were rare, since the map-makers made little use of symbols. The most significant elements represented with symbols beyond the hydrography were fur trading posts, locations of waterfalls and rapids, portages, and perhaps trails or certain hill-lands. The depiction of terrain was of the simplest form.

WINTERERS AS MAP-MAKERS

The history of the Hudson's Bay Company's mapping of the interior plains separates tidily into two main periods. The exploratory period, from 1755 to 1815, encompasses almost all of the maps derived from primary exploration, sketches based on native people's knowledge and concepts, and composite regional maps illustrating the growth of geographical information. The second period, from 1815 to 1870, was one of greater diversity of subjects. Cadastral maps (recording property boundaries and other details of settlement), district maps, and maps made for special purposes were concentrated in this span of years. During the same period the company received many maps in correspondence with other businesses.

The pattern of geographical discovery of the West in 1690, when the Hudson's Bay Company entered the northern plains, was generally unchanged from that of twenty years before. Coastal knowledge still dominated, for none of the company's servants ever traveled more than a few miles up the rivers, usually in search of firewood or game. The extent of involvement of the wintering servants from 1754 to 1774 is difficult to describe since most were illiterate, and few left accounts of their travels. The only map produced by a winterer has not survived. Six different men appear to have traveled inland between 1754 and 1763, on nine different journeys. Living with Indian groups along the line of the Saskatchewan and North Saskatchewan rivers, these company explorers essentially defined the arc of mixed forest, park belt, and northern grasslands, in concert with the French, who were operating mainly from the Manitoba plains. The pace increased from 1763 to 1774, the period of dominant wintering, when twelve servants were involved.

In 1755, when Henday gave his sketch to James Isham, the York factor, Isham made a fair copy and sent it to London.⁵ Isham probably threw away the original, for it must have been very rough. In any case, neither has survived; nor did Isham's 1757 rendition of Smith and Waggoner's wintering itinerary northwest of Lake Winnipeg and in the upper Assiniboine valley.⁶ Furthermore, the draft of William Tomison's 1767-68 trip from Severn Fort to the Lake Winnipeg region, drawn by William Falconer, the sloop master at Severn, is no longer available in the collection.⁷ To compound the loss, Falconer's 1774 map of the "interior part of the Country" has also disappeared.⁸

Only two maps of this early period relating to the inland winterers are extant (fig. 1). Both maps, made by Andrew Graham at York in 1772 and 1774, are successive versions of some of the full data available.⁹ The most significant inclusions are the routes followed by Tomison from Severn to the grassland plains, including the mention for the first time on an English map of the dry grasslands, "Barren

Ground. Buffalo plenty in winter," and the earliest map of Indian tribal regions in the West, inserting the boundaries in a rather geometric fashion. The geographic detail is selective and covers only Cocking's journey near the Saskatchewan River forks. Graham's orientation, scale, and shape are very much off for Lake Winnipeg. He enjoyed preparing his personal cartouches and used color coding.

THE SASKATCHEWAN AND THE MACKENZIE

In the next twenty years, the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to change its tactics on the plains, since the wintering program had proved to be absolutely inadequate for the task that confronted the company. Independent Canadian traders had occupied many of the strategic trading sites on the plains. With the erection of Cumberland House in 1774, the Hudson's Bay Company became inland traders also, and began the fascinating but cutthroat chess game of post construction. The pattern that developed was peripheral, that is, along the northern and eastern fringes of the grasslands, in mixed forest and park belt, from which traders moved west and south onto the open grassland, and farther north and west on the forested plains. For the first time, the company also passed out of Rupert's Land into the Mackenzie basin, along the eastern edge of the interior lowlands.

The cartographic record for these two decades is more extensive than for the wintering era. Yet, unfortunately, about half of the eighteen maps relating to the region are no longer extant. Nine of the maps record the accumulating knowledge and more precise locating of the topographic features of the Nelson-Saskatchewan line and northern Manitoba lakes, but only one of these maps depicts the plains region alone. One map is a witness to the founding of Cumberland House, drawn by the expedition leader, Samuel Hearne, on his return to York in 1775.¹⁰ It is a classic map of its genre, similar in style to many drafted later, although less precise in its locational framework

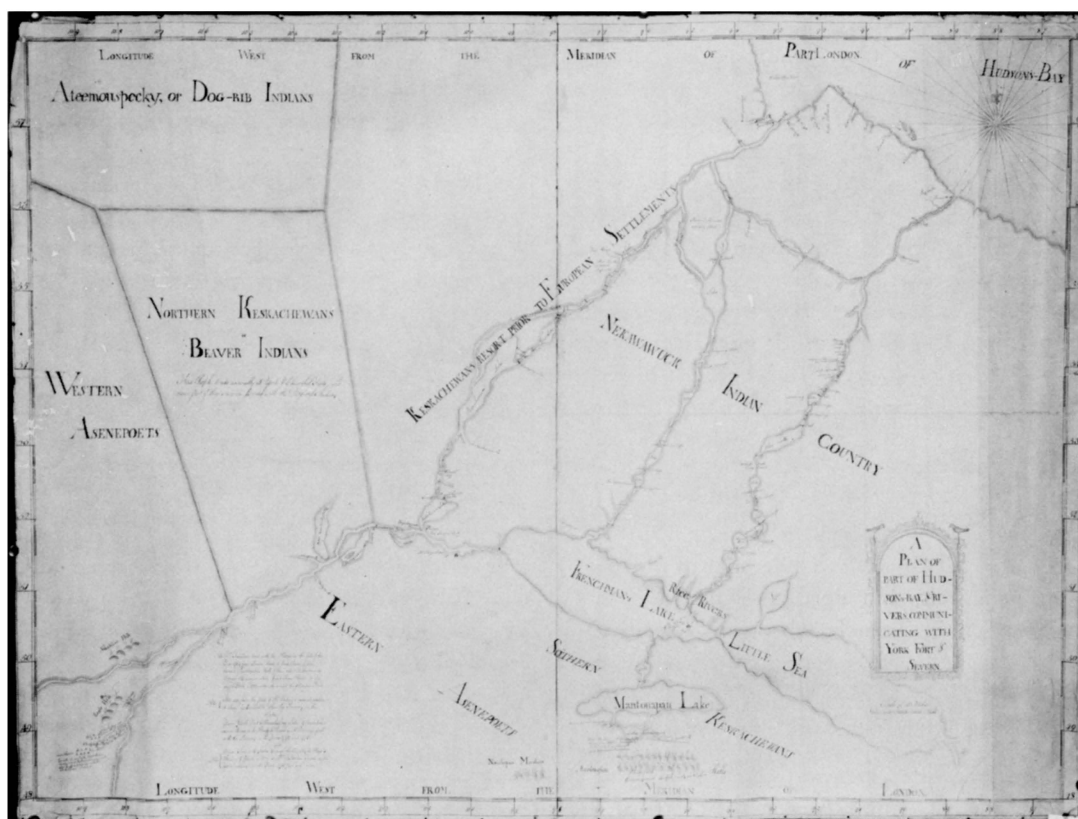


FIG. 1. [Andrew Graham], "A Plan of Part of Hudson's Bay and Rivers, Communicating with York Fort and Severn, 1774." Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg, G. 2/17 (hereafter HBCA, PAM).

than the map of 1779 made by Philip Turnor (fig. 2). Turnor had been hired full-time to take careful observations of latitudes and longitudes on the established trade routes in the west and north.¹¹ This map, the first in a series by Turnor, was the result of his journey to the plains from York and up the Saskatchewan River as far as the new cabin that was opened that winter above the forks of the Saskatchewan.

David Thompson came onto the mapping scene during this period. A Grey Coat Hospital apprentice being groomed by the company to join Turnor's expedition into the Athabasca country, Thompson had the great misfortune to crush his leg and to be replaced by Peter Fidler. Both Thompson and Fidler had been tutored in surveying methods and computation

at Cumberland House by Turnor. When his leg had nearly mended, Thompson used his revived training to make observations and then to draft his first map, showing the route from Cumberland, through Lake Winnipeg, to York Fort.¹² This map is not in the collection; however, Thompson's developing style may be observed in a large compilation of 1794, which extended his mapping on the Nelson River and particularly up the Saskatchewan to Buckingham House in the forest-parkland transition zone.¹³

PETER FIDLER:
COMPANY CARTOGRAPHER

Turnor's teaching was not misplaced in Peter Fidler, who became the preeminent explorer-

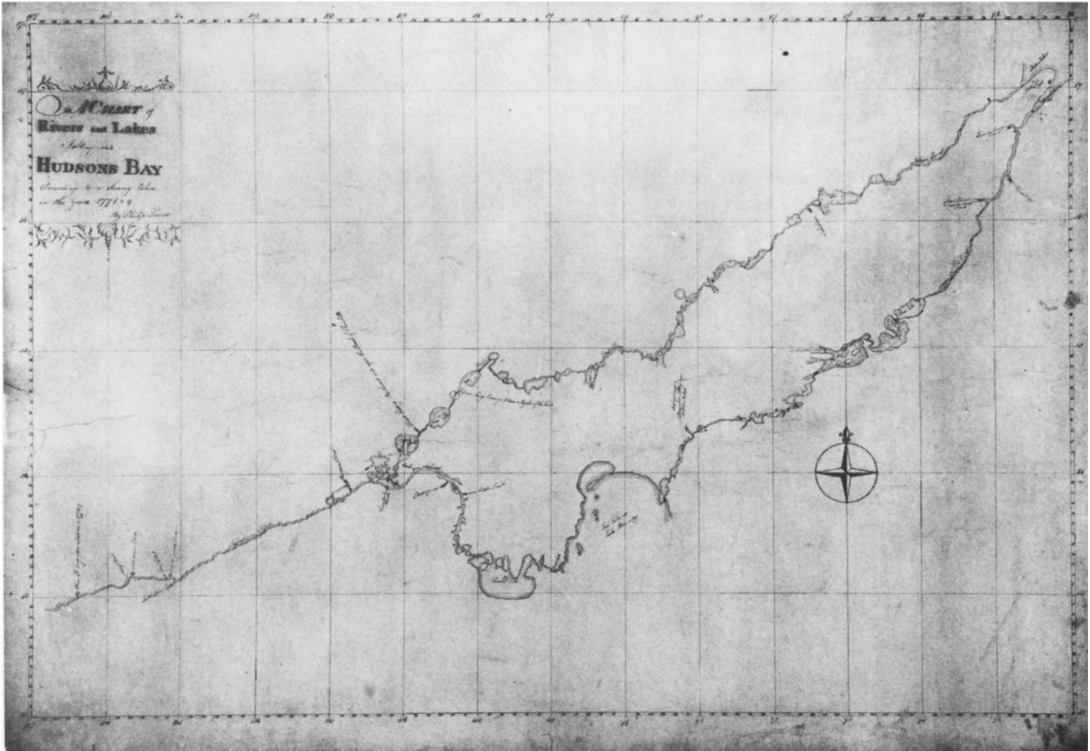


FIG. 2. Philip Turnor, "A Chart of Rivers and Lakes Falling into Hudsons Bay, 1779." HBCA, PAM, G. 1/21.

surveyor-cartographer of the Hudson's Bay Company during the next several decades. On his first posting in 1790 to 1792, across Methye Portage and on to Great Slave Lake, Fidler began to develop his careful observational and mapping methods, making continuous and sequential annotated sketches with full journal notes, which distinguished him from other employees engaged in mapping. Fidler drafted detailed, larger-scale maps of the entire journey, while Turnor produced a sixteen-sheet map of the shield portion of the track. The series is not now in the company archives, but smaller-scale renditions appeared later.

After his Athabasca tour, Fidler was sent to Buckingham House, and almost immediately was assigned to wander southwest through the parklands and grasslands to the upper Bow River. Remaining there until early winter, he drifted back northeast across the Red Deer

River to the fort. Later, at York Factory, he put together all of his sketches and notes into a map of a "Journey to the Stony Mountains." In addition, for one of the factors, he compiled a map of the normally used waterways from York Fort up to Edmonton House. Neither of these useful studies is in the collection today.

Three regional maps (1791, 1792, and 1794) recapitulate the company's knowledge of the Great Plains and illustrate the effect of its developing trading strategy. The first, undoubtedly drawn in 1791 by Donald McKay and Edward Jarvis of Albany, indicates the areas of experience of McKay, formerly a North West Company trader, who came over to the Hudson's Bay Company with a plan to have the company cut west across the main track of the Canadian traders from the Albany system (fig. 3).¹⁴ His map lays out the strategy, which was to establish company posts from the

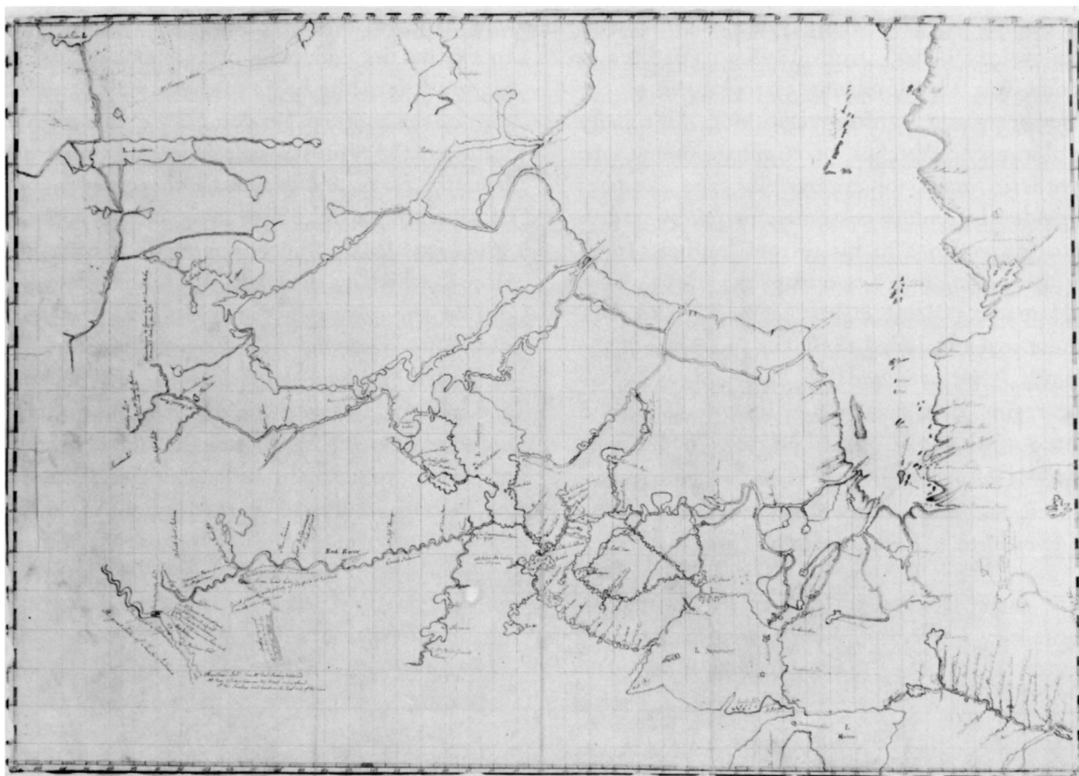


FIG. 3. Edward Jarvis and Donald McKay, "A Map of Hudsons Bay and interior Westerly particularly above Albany, 1791." HBCA, PAM, G. 1/13.

Winnipeg River into the Red and Assiniboine country, a direct thrust west from Albany River headwaters. The Assiniboine River, labeled the Red, stretches west to within a short overland walk to the Missouri.

None of McKay's cartographic forms appear on Turnor's 1792 map.¹⁵ It shows the detail of the Athabasca journey, which extended along the east side of the plains, and displays (most intriguingly, in red ink) configurations of the Beaver and Peace river areas, obtained from Indians and various Canadian traders. A compendium of company activity and cartographic production is memorialized on Philip Turnor's map of 1794.¹⁶ Drafted in Britain, this magnum opus is a large work, six by nine feet in dimension. Prepared at the end of Turnor's career with the company, the map reflects, especially for the plains region, the significance

of the mapping by Fidler. It also demonstrates that few of the inland employees located at the Saskatchewan posts had been encouraged sufficiently to observe and record their wide-ranging travels.

The fact that the plains were still largely terra incognita is quite apparent also on the historic map of 1795 prepared by Aaron Arrowsmith. This young cartographer had been chosen by the company to be given access to all its maps and travel records when the company changed its policy from secrecy to a more public disclosure of its activities. Arrowsmith and his cartographic descendants became unofficial cartographers of the Hudson's Bay Company until the demise of the business. Turnor's maps of 1792 and 1794, and the McKay-Jarvis map of 1791, were the crucial elements of Arrowsmith's plains configurations.

During the last twenty years of this major exploratory period, from 1795 to 1815, Peter Fidler was the dominant cartographer of the interior plains, either reworking his many exploratory sketches, compiling them into synthetic maps, or transcribing the sketches provided by Indian customers or fellow traders into ink versions in his private journals. In all he drew some thirty-two maps at various scales, and made at least eighty segmental sketches. These maps included the lakes and rivers of the Beaver River area west to Lesser Slave Lake—the region that Turnor had first depicted and Arrowsmith copied—based on rough detail from Fidler’s informants.

Fidler was suitably chosen by the company to expand its collecting of pemmican and furs far south into the heart of the dry plains at the turn of the century. No company employee had followed the South Saskatchewan far upstream from the forks, and except for the upper courses of its tributaries, the river was unmapped. From 1800 to 1802 Fidler operated Chesterfield House, which he had had built, and there, far out in the plains in the midst of a congeries of Indian tribes who visited by the hundreds, he fashioned his concepts of the western high plains and mountain ranges. Fidler perfected his technique of questioning the Indians, inducing some of them to sketch out their geographical

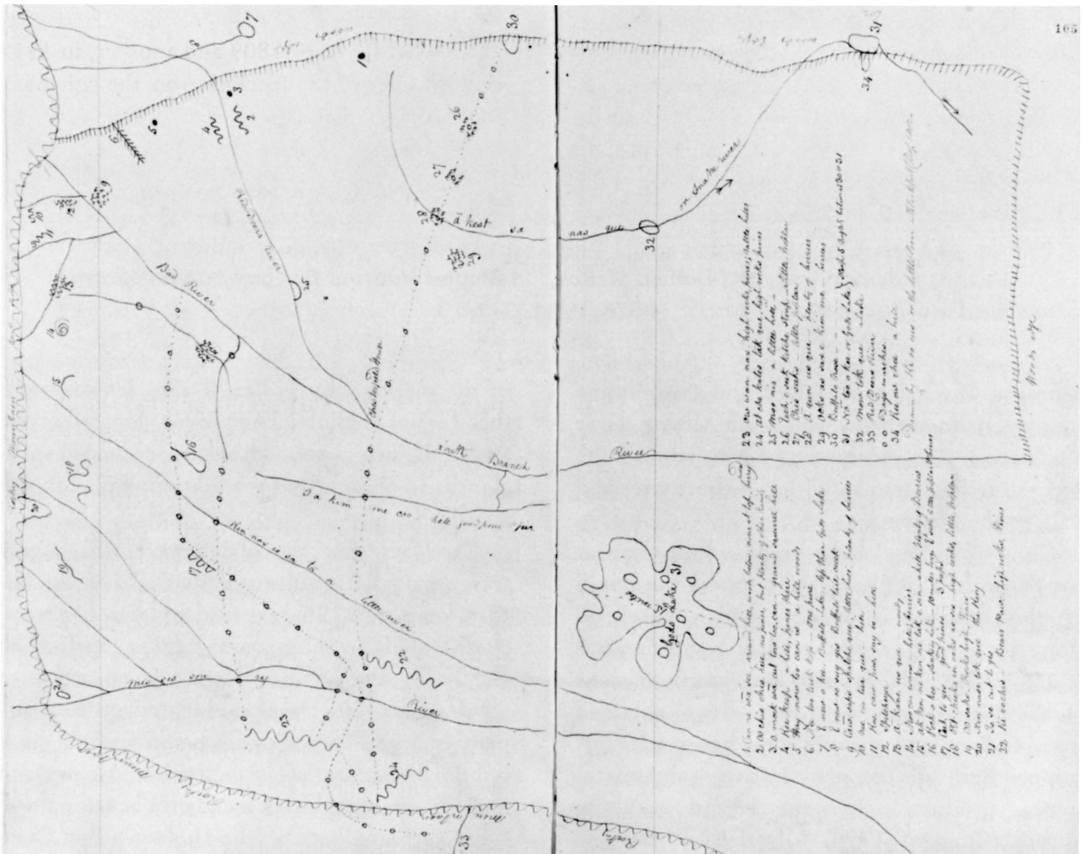


FIG. 4. *Kioocus or the Little Bear, a Blackfoot Chief, "Indian map showing Missouri, South Saskatchewan Rivers and Northwards, drawn by Peter Fidler in his journal, 1802."* HBCA, PAM, E. 3/2, fols. 104d-105.

understanding of their territories, and inserting Indian place-names.

Fidler produced nine maps based on Indian data and one large composite map of the western plains. The Ackomokki, Akkowieak, and Kioocus maps have become well known. The Ackomokki map of 1801, oriented to the west, depicts the vast extent of the Rocky Mountains south into the great fan of Missouri River tributaries.¹⁷ A second version from 1802 gives greater attention to the South Saskatchewan and its tributaries.¹⁸ Akkowieak's map of 1802, similarly, is more concerned with the Canadian plains rivers.¹⁹ The Kioocus contribution, though not as comprehensive, provides a more accurate picture of the vegetative and terrain pattern of this immense land.²⁰ The map depicts the "woods edge" somewhere in the lower course of the Battle River, reaching southwest to the foothills and stretching unbroken to clothe the bow of the Absaroka Range and Big Horn Mountains. Across the plains, Kioocus traced out various Indian trails, with distances depicted by a symbol for each night's sleep (fig. 4).

Fidler's compilation was a six-sheet series extending from Buckingham House to the Bow River, with an appended one-and-one-half sheet extending south into the Missouri country, based on information from his Blackfoot sources.²¹ The map reached London and was turned over to the cartographer Aaron Arrowsmith. The executive committee also notified Alexander Dalrymple and Sir Joseph Banks of the Royal Society because "these Discoveries should be of sufficient Importance to attract . . . [their] notice."²² The original series was apparently not returned to the company's office—a tragic loss for the history of western cartography. Fortunately, the details from Fidler's lost map appeared on Arrowsmith's map of 1802 and on several later editions of these famous maps based on Indian sources, because they were the only up-to-date printed representations of this area (fig. 5).

Fidler's cartographic renditions of interior plains locales are diverse in area and in form. They range from the 1796 map of the Swan

River and upper Assiniboine, based on information gathered during his posting there, through various transcriptions of Indian and traders' sketches, to the detailed contour of Lake Winnipeg, drawn from his measurements in the field and his own sequential drawings.²³ Careful study of a page of Fidler's sketches, based on some sketches by a Canadian trader who conversed with Fidler in the Swan River area in 1808, shows the care he took before he himself mapped the Assiniboine and Red rivers.²⁴

Another map-maker who made significant contributions to Hudson's Bay Company cartography during the early exploration period was Joseph Howse. The first company man to cross the Rocky Mountains and the first to open company trade in the Columbia region, Howse produced a map of the South Saskatchewan River in 1809 and another, in 1812, of both sides of the Rockies from the Athabasca River to the Missouri.²⁵

MAPPING TASKS, 1815 TO 1870

The second major period of Hudson's Bay Company mapping, from 1815 to 1870, witnessed not only a reduction in the amount that was undertaken but also a change in the company's situation. For one thing, topographical mapping was greatly reduced. The elimination of the most difficult portages in order to expedite boat transport was the main concern of waterway mapping. For this purpose, William Kempt and George Taylor, Jr., prepared maps of the York Fort to Red River route. Taylor also mapped the Saskatchewan-Athabasca network through Fort Edmonton to aid the main supply brigades. At the request of Chief Factor McTavish of York, probably between 1824 and 1827, Taylor used Fidler's maps and records to piece together a "Fidler" map of the West, but it never reached the head office in London. The map is now located in the National Map Collection, Ottawa.

Among the thirty or so maps attributable to this second period are five district maps. At the time of the reorganization of the company into departments and districts, the district

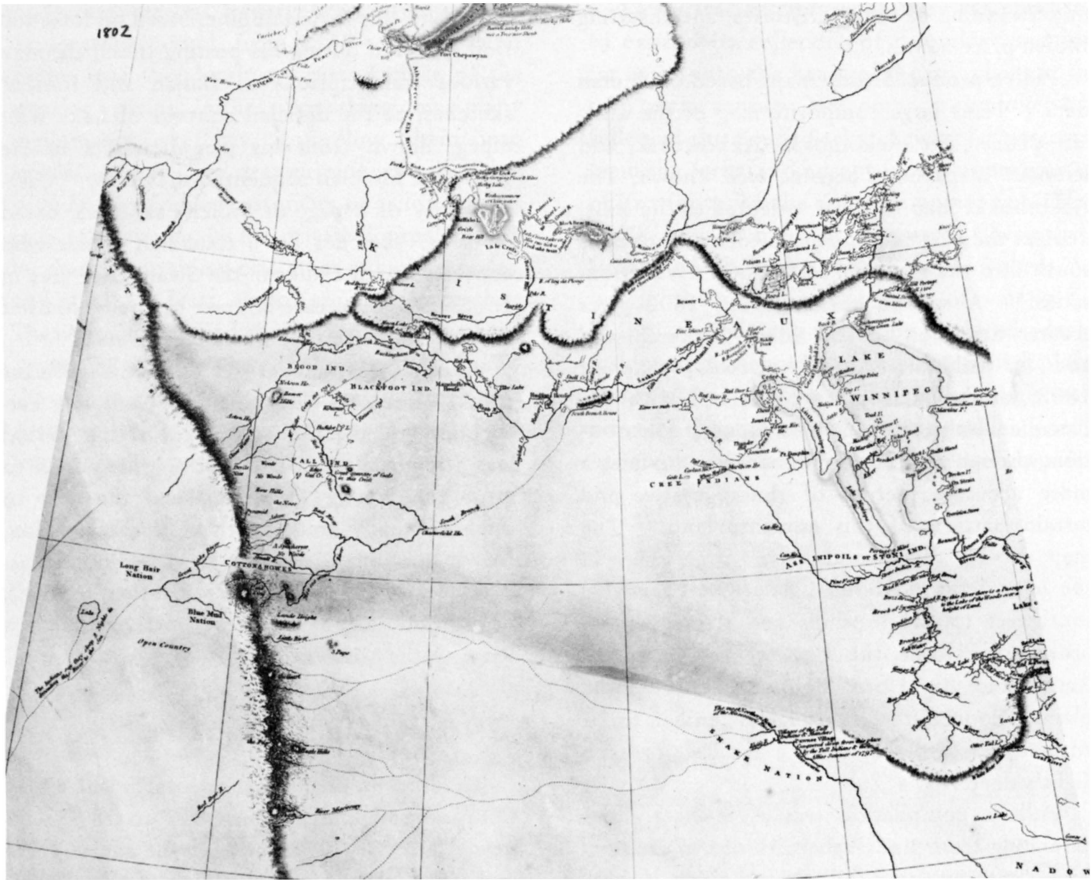


FIG. 5. Aaron Arrowsmith, "Portion of a Map Exhibiting all the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America, 1802." HBCA, PAM, G. 3/672.

masters were instructed to write detailed reports on their regions, with illustrative maps. Some factors found the cartography too difficult to undertake, and a number just ignored the directive. The maps that came in varied in quality and usefulness. Fidler provided two, one of the Red River (fig. 6), and one of the Manitoba district, his final assignment.²⁶ Robert Kennedy sent a map from the Lesser Slave Lake district, reaching from the Beaver River to the Peace River.²⁷ The scale is distorted somewhat, but he provided enough detail to be useful to the chief factors and executive committee members. James Bird's lack of drafting skill is apparent in his map of the Fort Carlton district at the forks of the Saskatchewan, but he

provided valuable topographic detail, including rivers, creeks, lakes, sloughs, hills, and grassland plains.²⁸

The largest corpus of maps of this period are cadastral, showing details related to settlement. Eight of the twelve cadastral maps depict the growth of the surveyed plan of the Selkirk colony at Red River. Fidler was the first to aid the settlers in laying out some of their lot lines, and he was followed by Kempt and Taylor from 1823 to 1838. Taylor was seconded to the Selkirk colony to develop a census, to act as surveyor, and to prepare an official plan for the settlement. He brought out an earlier version, but from 1836 to 1838, Taylor laid out the lines on the ground and drew a full plan of

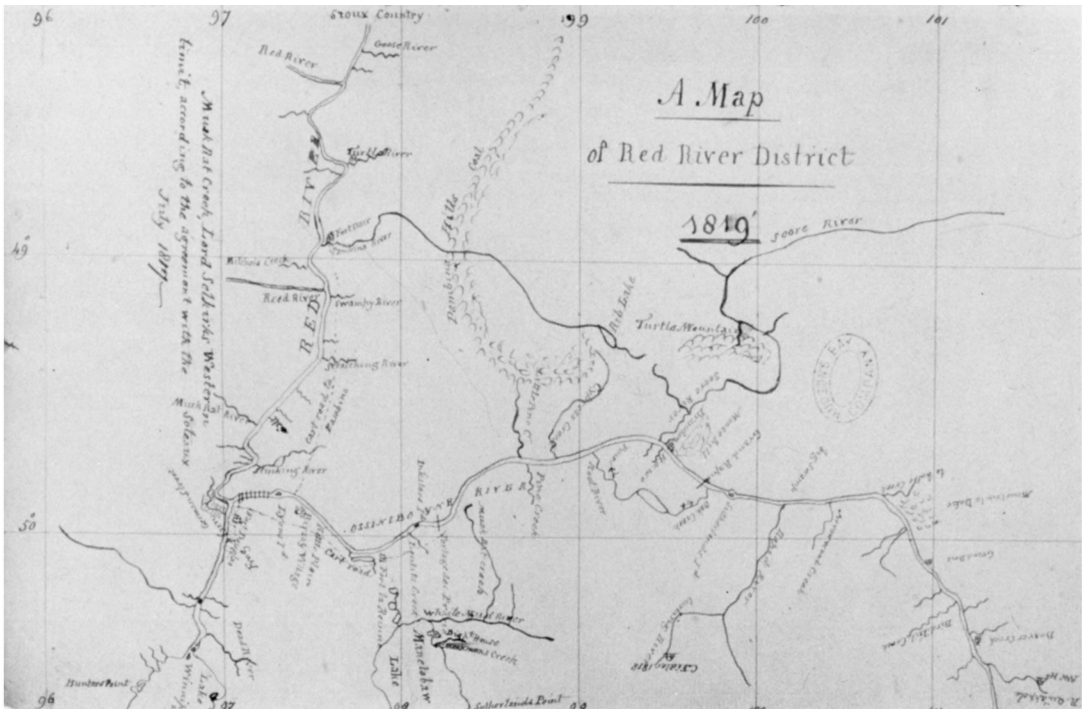


FIG. 6. Peter Fidler, "A Map of Red River District, 1819." HBCA, PAM, B22/e/1, fol. 1.

the village. The quality of Taylor's work in drafting the plan was unmatched by any other company employee in the interior during this period (fig. 7).²⁹

In the collection are a suite of maps and plans drawn by Mervin Vavasour. Along with Henry Warre, a fellow British army officer at Quebec, Vavasour was sent surreptitiously and incognito across the plains to the Columbia in 1845 and 1846. This was a period of border and territorial stress, and the company was anxious to have a professional assessment of the situation and advice on the defensive possibilities of specific posts and sites, in case of American incursion. Acting as wealthy young British travelers, sportsmen, and sketchers, Vavasour and Warre provided maps and sketches on the plains and across the mountains, and drew plans of Fort Ellice, Fort Carlton, and Fort Edmonton, showing military capabilities. The company was given a copy of their report and a set of all their maps and plans.

Another group of maps prepared on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1864 were five dealing with the examination of a route for a proposed telegraph line, to be financed by the company and built across the plains from Red River to the Yellowhead Pass, and eventually on to Victoria. The company chose Dr. John Rae, the distinguished Arctic explorer and a former chief factor, to carry out the investigation, along with a young assistant, A. W. Schwieger, and a small crew. They traversed the country estimating timber resources, the amount of filling and cutting required, the difficulties of the terrain, and the distances between segments of the proposed course. Rae worked on four field maps of sections of the route, including one of the entire proposal. Not all four have remained in the collection, but Schwieger's final map of the route across the plains is available.³⁰

For eight decades after 1755, the Hudson's Bay Company was particularly concerned with



FIG. 7. George Taylor, Jr., "Part of Plan of Red River Colony Surveyed in 1836, 1836-1838." *The Red River runs north and the Assiniboine tributary flows in from the west.* HBCA, PAM, E6/14.

the cartographic delineation of the Precambrian shield and the northern plains west of Hudson Bay. After this, its mapping efforts were concentrated in the cordillera, on the Pacific coast, in the Arctic, and in interior Quebec. The earlier phase witnessed the work of many individuals and of some small groups, searching for easier and more efficient routes, seeking out customers, and engaging in trade with them. Their maps illuminated the major lineaments of this immense region, the plains of Rupert's Land. In concert, these company travelers provided the cartographic foundation for the work of scientific expeditions that assessed the natural environment later in the nineteenth century, and for public surveyors who parcelled out the land. In 1870 the company relinquished its charter rights and obligations on the Rupert's Land plains to the British crown. In cartographic terms, the Hudson's Bay Company

had played a significant role as Canada's first "national" mapping agency.

NOTES

The author gratefully acknowledges the Hudson's Bay Company Archives for use of their map records.

1. These figures include manuscript and printed maps and were obtained through a recent detailed preliminary inventory by the author.

2. Some of the maps are in other collections, but most have not been found.

3. From the author's detailed study of the history of the cartography of the Hudson's Bay Company between 1670 and 1870, to be published by the Hudson's Bay Record Society.

4. Richard I. Ruggles, "Hospital Boys of the Bay: The Hudson's Bay Company Surveying

and Mapping Apprentices," *The Beaver*, Outfit 308 (Autumn 1977): 4-11.

5. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg (hereafter HBCA, PAM), A11/144, fol. 197.

6. HBCA, PAM, A11/115, fol. 10d.

7. HBCA, PAM, A64/45, no. 11.

8. HBCA, PAM, A5/1, fol. 169.

9. HBCA, PAM, G2/15 and G2/17.

10. HBCA, PAM, G1/20.

11. There are two copies of this map, HBCA, PAM, G1/21 and G1/22.

12. HBCA, PAM, A11/117, fols. 54, 109d, and A5/3, fol. 64d.

13. HBCA, PAM, G2/18.

14. HBCA, PAM, G1/13.

15. HBCA, PAM, G2/13.

16. HBCA, PAM, G2/32.

17. HBCA, PAM, E3/2, fols. 106d-107.

18. HBCA, PAM, E3/2, fol. 104.

19. HBCA, PAM, E3/2, fol. 103d.

20. HBCA, PAM, E3/2, fols. 104d-105.

21. HBCA, PAM, A11/52, fols. 1, 2d; B39/a/2, fols. 22, 23d.

22. HBCA, PAM, A5/4, fol. 103d.

23. HBCA, PAM, G2/19; HBCA, PAM, G1/28b.

24. HBCA, PAM, E3/4, fol. 18.

25. HBCA, PAM, A64/52, no. 73; HBCA, PAM, A64/52, no. 58.

26. HBCA, PAM, B22/e/1, fol. 1d; HBCA, PAM, B51/e/1, fols. 1d-2.

27. HBCA, PAM, B115/e/1, fol. 1d.

28. HBCA, PAM, G1/27.

29. HBCA, PAM, E6/14.

30. HBCA, PAM, G1/327.