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**Britain and the Fur Trade:
Commerce and Consumers in the
North-Atlantic World, 1783-1821**

David Hope

PhD

2016

**Britain and the Fur Trade:
Commerce and Consumers in the
North-Atlantic World, 1783-1821**

David Hope

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the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Design & Social Sciences

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Abstract

This is a study of the mercantile organisation of the British fur trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The thesis seeks to answer two over-arching questions. Firstly, why did the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) maintain its Charter and acquire a monopoly of the British fur trade during a period of significant trade liberalisation in British overseas commerce? Secondly, why did London remain the European emporium of the North-Atlantic fur trade despite the rise of the provincial outports in other branches of Britain's colonial and foreign trades?

In seeking to answer these questions, the thesis explores each stage of the British fur trade in order to establish the factors that prolonged the continuation of the London mercantilist system in the trade. Underpinning these explorations is a detailed study of the trade statistics contained within the British customs' records, as well as, from sale, purchase, and employee ledgers, and correspondence contained within the HBC Archives. The thesis presents the argument that developments occurring on both sides of the North-Atlantic World supported the continuation of the mercantilist system in the fur trade, and that the trade was actually a more robust model of that system in 1821 than it had been in 1783. The factors that led the British government to grant the HBC a *de facto* monopoly of the British fur trade in 1821 were multifaceted and it was not, as much of the existing literature suggests, a simple business merger. Ecological constraints in North America limited the potential for growth in the trade and made the enterprise ever more specialised, which served to discourage new entrants and to increase pressure on existing participants. Limited prospects for expansion and the presence of the rival North West Company (NWC) restrained the critiques of British manufacturers towards the HBC. From 1815, violent confrontations between the HBC and NWC on the frozen frontiers of the British North American Empire increased political scrutiny of the fur trade and led metropolitan interests to conclude that a single company with a monopoly of the fur trade was preferable to the injurious effects of unrestrained free market competition. The continued importance of the re-export trade and the buying preferences of the consumers who purchased the trade's high-value products kept the trade centred on the metropolitan economy and restricted its proliferation to other British ports. Finally, the role of Cain and Hopkins' 'gentlemanly capitalists' proved crucial, as the total absence of provincial opposition allowed the future of the fur trade to be solely shaped by the hands of London's commercial elite.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas, and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Research Ethics Committee on 19/12/2012.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 84,617 words.

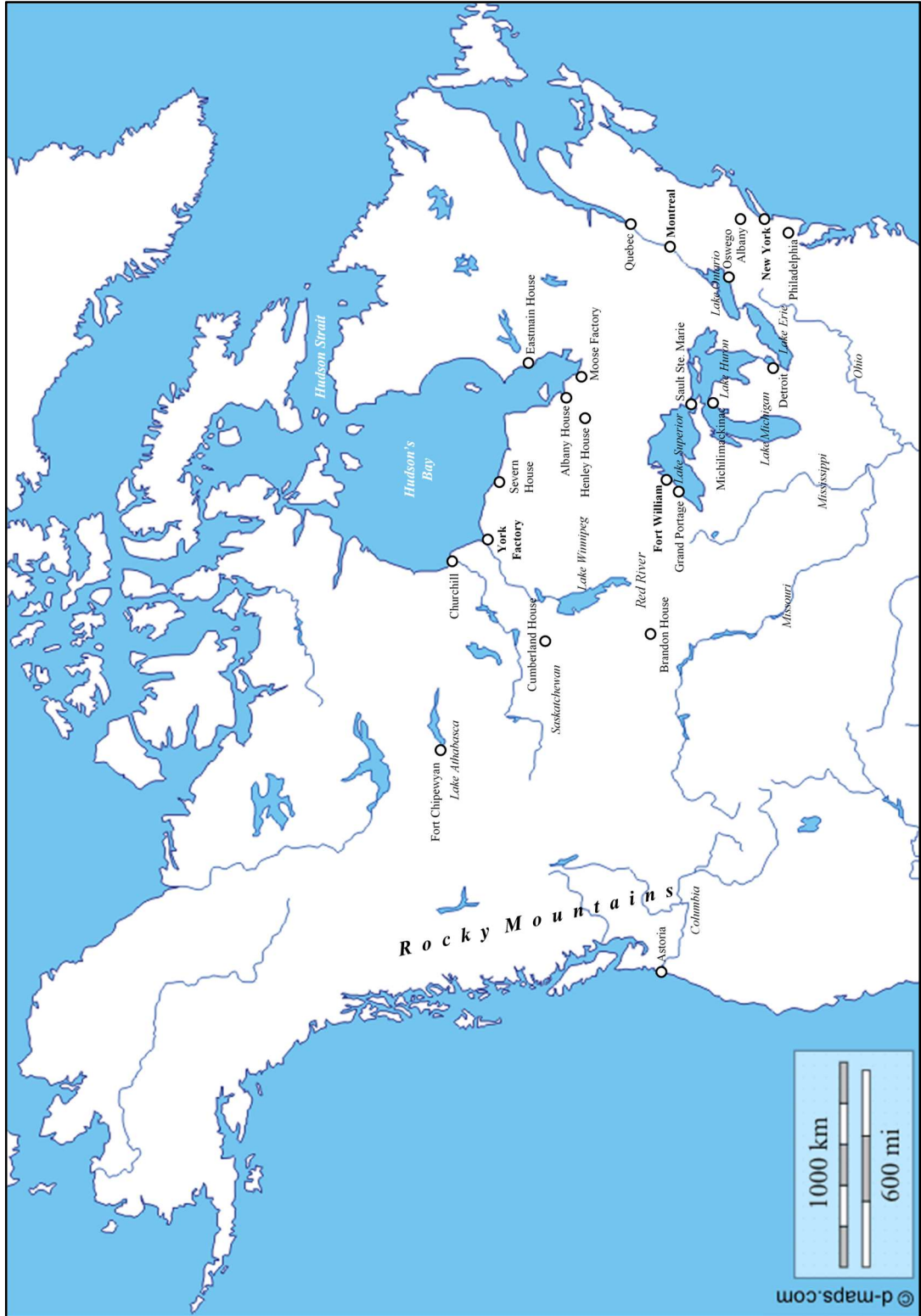
David Hope

30/09/2016

List of Abbreviations

AFC	American Fur Company
EIC	British East India Company
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
HBCA	Hudson's Bay Company Archives
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
OHC	Oxfordshire History Centre
P.P.	British Parliamentary Papers
NWC	North West Company
TNA	The National Archives
XYC	New North West Company

Map of North America



Introduction

On 23 June 1857, Edward Ellice — British merchant-banker, landowner, and politician — sat before the Parliamentary Select Committee that had been appointed to examine the affairs of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC).¹ It was the final day of witness examinations and Ellice, with his expert knowledge of Canadian affairs, was well placed to inform the Committee on the activities of the Company and on the development of British North America. During the questioning, Ellice proudly reflected on his role in bringing about the 1821 agreement that had formed the basis upon which the British fur trade had been conducted in the intervening years. Ellice recollected how Lord Bathurst, then Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, had asked for his assistance in restoring order to the fur trade. He explained how open competition in the trade had brought about its ruin, with two great concerns, the HBC and North West Company of Montreal (NWC), having been brought to near-bankruptcy by their intense rivalry for control of the trade. In order to keep the peace, Ellice had devised a plan for the two companies to merge amicably, and for Parliament to pass legislation that would ensure that the rejuvenated HBC would have its new-found monopoly of the British fur trade protected by the conferral of a temporary royal license that would grant the exclusive right to trade in territories that were not included in the Company’s original Charter. By ensuring that a single company had a monopoly of the fur trade, Ellice envisaged that ‘Aboriginal peoples’ and the future prosperity of the trade would be protected, which in turn would guarantee the stability of Britain’s North American Empire.² Some Committee members

¹ See *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson’s Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), pp. 22-53.

² In line with the approach taken by Carolyn Podruchny, the term ‘Aboriginal peoples’ is used to refer to the diverse array of indigenous communities living in North America whose cultural association with the continent pre-dates the arrival of European settlers. This term is preferable over the use of ‘indigenous peoples’ in this context because, when using the latter, it becomes confusing when discussing the children of western fur traders and Aboriginal women. In the Canadian context at least, the use of ‘Native American’ is frowned upon and the term ‘Amerindian’ is not as widely used as it is in the United States. The use of ‘native’ and ‘indian’ also comes with its own colonial baggage. Considering a greater proportion of the British fur trade took place in modern-day Canada it seems appropriate to adopt the Canadian convention. Of course it is preferable to refer to a specific community by name where possible as these were distinct societies with their own religious beliefs, rituals, social structures, and economic activities. No less than seven different ‘nations’ visited the NWC’s Fort George and the HBC’s Buckingham House — each situated far to the north-west of Lake Winnipeg — and they included the Cree, Swampy Ground Assiniboine, Ojibwa and Iroquois, Blackfoot, Assiniboine,

were rather bemused by Ellice's position. This was after all the era of Free Trade, the philosophy that had become the quasi-religion of Victorian Britain.³ Just eight years before, indeed, the Navigation Acts, the central pillar of the mercantilist system, had been repealed. The British East India Company's (EIC) role in overseas trade had ended with the loss of its China monopoly in 1833. Ever since the eighteenth century the view that chartered companies were inefficient institutions that hindered the growth of British overseas trade had gathered support amongst commercial elites. In the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith had launched a devastating assault on the deficiencies of the mercantilist system and had targeted much of his criticism towards the EIC.⁴ Why then did the fur trade depart from the conventional wisdom that allowing exclusive trading rights to particular institutions was injurious to the nation's overseas trade?

This is the question that lies at the heart of this thesis. Why did monopoly emerge and a chartered company persist in the British fur trade? It is a development that runs counter to the accepted view that chartered companies were in retreat from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. The extant literature of the British fur trade does not adequately address this question, and neither has imperial and economic history more broadly. For the most part, the fur trade has been studied in isolation. Much is known about the various trading companies that emerged in the trade, the origins and experience of the labour employed by these enterprises, the exchange of material goods between Western fur traders and Aboriginal peoples, and the role of women in the trade.⁵ Few

Gros Ventres, and the Sarsi, Blood, and Peigan. See Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. xii-xiii; and Lynda Gullason, "'No less than 7 different nations': Ethnicity and Culture Contact at Fort George-Buckingham House", in Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1994), pp. 117-42.

³ For a compelling account of how 'Free Trade', through the interaction of commerce, consumption, and civil society, entered the British national consciousness from the mid-nineteenth century onwards see Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ See Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations: Books IV-V*, edited by Andrew Skinner (London: Penguin Books, 1999), especially pp. 33-4, 39-41, 44-5, 67, 72-5, 245-7, 344.

⁵ On fur trading companies see in particular Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *The North West Company* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957); E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870: Vol 1: 1670-1763* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958); and E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870: Vol 2: 1763-1870* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959). On the labour employed by British fur-trading companies see Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1870* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); and Suzanne Rigg, *Men of Spirit and Enterprise: Scots and Orkneymen in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1780-1821* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2011). On the material exchanges between Aboriginal peoples and Western fur traders see David V. Burley, J. Scott Hamilton and Knut R. Fladmark, *Prophecy of the Swan: The Upper Peace River Fur Trade of 1794-1823* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1996); Ann M. Carlos

studies have, however, attempted to compare the fur trade with other trades or situate it within broader debates about British imperialism. This is significant as the fur trade was an important part of the British imperial experience and requires greater attention and acknowledgement. It is true that studies of empire have explored in some detail the key role that the fur trade played in building trust and securing alliances between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples across North America or, alternatively, in the emergence of the so-called ‘middle ground’.⁶ What British imperial historiography lacks, however, is a study that asks more generally what the fur trade can tell us about the political economy of empire itself.

In terms of the organisation of British overseas trade in the eighteenth century, there are very few studies of the fur trade that extend beyond North America to consider how the trade fitted into the world economy.⁷ This is probably partly because the trade comprised only a tiny fraction of Britain’s imports and exports. As a result, it cannot be argued that the fur trade made a significant contribution to the rapid expansion of the British economy from the final decades of the eighteenth century. Indeed, the fur trade is more often talked about in terms of its importance to the development of Canada, a subject first surveyed by Harold Innis in his seminal study *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1930).⁸

and Frank D. Lewis, *Commerce by a Frozen Sea: Native Americans and the European Fur Trade* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 2010); George Irving Quimby, *Indian Culture and European Trade Goods: The Archaeology of the Historic Period in the Western Great Lakes Region* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966); and Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974). On the role of women in the fur trade see Jennifer S. H. Brown, ‘Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Metis Communities’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 519-28; Susan Sleeper-Smith, ‘Women, Kin, and Catholicism’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 443-80; Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); and Sylvia Van Kirk, “‘The Custom of the Country’: An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices”, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 481-518.

⁶ See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Also see W. J. Eccles, ‘The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 215-45.

⁷ The few studies that do have usually focused on the pre-1783 period. See Murray G. Lawson, *Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism, 1700-1775* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1943); Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 1*; Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*; E. E. Rich, ‘Russia and the Colonial Fur Trade’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1955), pp. 307-28; and E. E. Rich, *Montreal and the fur trade* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966).

⁸ Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956).

Since a chartered company played a major role in the British fur trade, one aspect that has been accorded greater attention is the HBC as an early prototype of the multinational corporation.⁹ The Company has also been used as a case study with which to explore how, in an age before modern communication, early modern firms and institutions involved in long-distance trade ensured that their overseas agents did not use their superior knowledge of local market conditions to defraud their managers. This is what economic historians commonly refer to as the ‘principal-agent problem’.¹⁰ The global trade network established by the NWC in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been another productive area of research that has shed light on the operation of the fur trade outside of North America.¹¹ It is clear, therefore, that in these wider explorations of the British fur trade it is the fur-trading companies and not the commodity trade per se that have been the central focus of analysis.

Despite the notable rise of Atlantic history over the past two decades, there has yet to be a detailed study of the fur trade that places the exchange into a wider conceptual framework that allows for connections to be drawn between Europe, America, and the rest of the world and for the impact of these linkages to be assessed. Indeed, very little is known about how the furs trapped in North America ended up in the hats, garments, and accessories that were worn in Europe and beyond. The organisation of the trade, the range and production methods of fur-using apparel, as well as distribution and retail channels remain largely unknown. Studies of the ‘Atlantic World’ certainly mention the fur trade in the context of interactions between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples in the Americas, although these discussions usually provide little more than a passing reference to the trade.¹² Even the extensive *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic*

⁹ Ann M. Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, ‘Giants of an Earlier Capitalism: The Early Chartered Companies as Modern Multinationals’, *Business History Review*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (1988), pp. 398-419.

¹⁰ See Ann M. Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, ‘Agency Problems in Early Chartered Companies: The Case of the Hudson’s Bay Company’, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (1990), pp. 853-75; and Ann M. Carlos, ‘Agent Opportunism and the Role of Company Culture: The Hudson’s Bay and Royal African Companies Compared’, *Business and Economic History*, Vol. 20, No 1 (1991), pp. 142-51.

¹¹ In particular, see Barry M. Gough, ‘The North West Company’s “Adventure to China”’, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (1975), pp. 309-32; H. Lloyd Keith, ‘Voyage of the Isaac Todd’, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (2008), pp. 566-97; Aisling MacQuarrie, et al, ‘Transnational Dimensions’, in Saúl Bermejo, Martykánová Darina Martínez, and Momir Samardžić, eds., *Layers of Power: Societies and Institutions in Europe* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2010), pp. 231-68; and Marion O’Neil, ‘The Maritime Activities of the North West Company, 1813 to 1821’, *The Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1930), pp. 243-67.

¹² For instance, see Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 250-1, 298, 319; and J. H.

World (2009) essentially confined its analysis to North America.¹³ If the ‘Atlantic World’ concept is to be used then it must be done so critically, as in the words of Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts it ‘means more than simply adding the term ‘Atlantic’ to the subtitle of one’s book, article or conference paper’ and must connect one’s specialised topic to the broader themes in Atlantic history.¹⁴ In the context of the fur trade, therefore, the emphasis still appears to be on a one-way process that asks what Europe did to the Americas rather than a multi-faceted approach that forms connections across the Atlantic basin. This is, in essence, the main aim of Atlantic history.

There is no single way to approach Atlantic history. The tripartite definition established by David Armitage is a useful starting point to determine how the perspective can be achieved in practice.¹⁵ The first, ‘circum-Atlantic’ treats the Atlantic rim as a zone of exchange and circulation, while the second, ‘trans-Atlantic’, is ultimately comparative and is akin to international history.¹⁶ The third, and for Armitage the most useful, is ‘cis-Atlantic’, which treats nations, states, regions, and institutions as unique places and seeks to reveal how these units were defined by their relationship to the ocean.¹⁷ Atlantic history has had its fair share of critics however.¹⁸ Peter A. Coclanis has argued that the Atlantic

Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 265-6.

¹³ Out of a total of 27 chapters only three could be said to bridge the Atlantic by looking at the interaction between developments in Europe and the Americas, although two of these are of the US fur trade rather than the British one. See Susan Sleeper-Smith, ‘Cultures of Exchange in a North Atlantic World’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. xvii-lxii; James L. Clayton, ‘The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 160-80; and James A. Hanson, ‘The Myth of the Silk Hat and the End of the Rendezvous’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 420-35.

¹⁴ Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, ‘Introduction’, in Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic World 1450-2000* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. xi-xiii. Alison Games has made a similar criticism that the ‘Atlantic history that many historians produce is rarely centred around the ocean, and the ocean itself is rarely relevant to the project’. See Alison Games, ‘Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities’, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2006), pp. 741-57.

¹⁵ David Armitage, ‘Three Concepts of Atlantic History’, in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 1-27. For another good discussion of what Atlantic history is see J. H. Elliott, ‘Atlantic History: A Circumnavigation’, in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 233-49.

¹⁶ Armitage, ‘Atlantic History’, pp. 16-21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-5.

¹⁸ For an excellent overview of the criticisms levied at Atlantic history as well as a defence of the perspective and a number of prescriptions for its future application see Jack P. Greene, and Philip D. Morgan, ‘Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History’, in Jack P. Greene, and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 3-33.

World gives too much weight to the Atlantic rim and inaccurately portrays the Atlantic as a discrete economic unit that is too sharply separated from other regions given that there was ‘lots of mixing, blending, blurring of East and West’.¹⁹ He proposes the addition of a fourth dimension to Armitage’s concepts — conjuncto-Atlantic history — over an endorsement of global history. It certainly seems too premature to speak of a ‘globalised’ economic system by 1800.²⁰ Indeed, David Eltis sees a shift away from a globalised economy in the nineteenth century through the emergence of intra-American and re-emergence of intra-African trade.²¹ Defenders of Atlantic history have also pointed to developments that occurred within the Atlantic World that were unprecedented in world history, such as the decimation of the Aboriginal population of the Americas and the unique aspects of transatlantic slavery.²² Coclanis proposes that conjuncto-Atlantic history can ‘offer a broader, richer, amplified view of Atlantic dynamics’ by linking up Atlantic processes with those in the extra-Atlantic, thus engaging with wider questions and other historiographies. Focusing more on exchange circuits, he proposes, offers a more constructive way in which to approach the Atlantic (and indeed world) history.²³

This thesis acknowledges these criticisms and the several propositions suggested by Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene for future works of Atlantic history.²⁴ In order to understand the shift towards monopoly and mercantilism that took place in the British fur trade during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is necessary to consider how developments on both sides of the Atlantic interacted and contributed to this historical outcome. It is also important to acknowledge the external influences of regions that lay outside of this exchange circuit. This is especially the case for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period when British and American merchants

¹⁹ Peter A. Coclanis, ‘Beyond Atlantic History’, in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 337-56. Also see Peter A. Coclanis, ‘Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2006), pp. 725-42. Alison Games has also argued that the borders between early-modern states and empires were more porous than many historians have believed. See Alison Games, ‘Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (2006), especially p. 684.

²⁰ For a good critique of the ‘globalisation’ concept and its applicability to the eighteenth-century Atlantic see Frederick Cooper, ‘What Is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective’, *African Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 399 (2001), pp. 189-213.

²¹ David Eltis, ‘Atlantic History in Global Perspective’, *Itinerario*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1999), pp. 141-61.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 148; and Nicholas Canny, ‘Atlantic History and Global History’, in Jack P. Greene, and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially p. 326.

²³ Coclanis, ‘Beyond Atlantic History’, p. 349. Frederick Cooper has also supported the idea of using ‘circuits’, at least in respect of religion and trade. See Cooper, ‘Concept of Globalization’, p. 210.

²⁴ See Morgan and Greene, ‘Atlantic History’, pp. 10-21.

established a thriving fur trade that stretched beyond the Atlantic and into the Pacific.²⁵ In this system, furs from the north-west coast of North America were shipped to Canton where they were exchanged for Asian tea, textiles, and ceramics. The elusive Northwest Passage continued to fascinate British explorers and several plans were proposed to integrate the Atlantic and Pacific fur trades. Alexander Dalrymple, Scottish hydrographer, even proposed in 1789 that the HBC should join with the EIC to grant Britain control of the fur trade to both Europe and China.²⁶ The explorer Alexander Mackenzie — who had journeyed across the North American interior to reach the Pacific Ocean by land in 1793 — envisioned the creation of comprehensive fur and fishing nexus that spanned across North America and into the Pacific.²⁷ The Pacific dimension was an integral part of the British fur trade during this period but its importance must not be over-exaggerated. Indeed, the bulk of the British fur trade operated within the confines of the ‘North-Atlantic World’ and it is here where this study largely confines its analysis. This does not mean that the Atlantic rim is the sole focus of attention. The fur trade penetrated deep into the North American continent and it is not, as some historians have claimed, counterproductive to move far from the Atlantic shore when writing Atlantic history.²⁸ Indeed, the ‘frontier’ of the fur trade was a continually moving boundary of exploitation that was considerably more mobile than was the case for sugar, cotton, tobacco, and other plantation crops.²⁹

By linking production, consumption, and commerce, commodities offer a fruitful vantage point from which to analyse Atlantic and global integration.³⁰ The ‘commodity

²⁵ See Gough, ‘Adventure to China’, pp. 309-32; Keith, ‘Isaac Todd’, pp. 566-97; and O’Neil, ‘Maritime Activities’, pp. 243-67. While it is mainly focused on the American fur trade to China also see James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992).

²⁶ Alexander Dalrymple, *Plan for promoting the fur-trade, and securing it to this country, by uniting the operations of the East-India and Hudson’s-Bay Companys* (London: Printed by George Bigg, 1789), especially pp. 25-32.

²⁷ Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal on the river St. Laurence, through the continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; In the years 1789 and 1793. With a preliminary account of the rise, progress, and present state of the fur trade of that country* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1801), p. 411.

²⁸ See Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. xxvii.

²⁹ William Beinart, and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 43.

³⁰ Armitage, ‘Atlantic History’, p. 17; and Games, ‘Atlantic History’, pp. 754-6. On the integration of the Atlantic World see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For a study that has focused on the circulation of goods across the Atlantic and the wide array of distributors who made this possible see Sheryllynne Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community, 1760-1810: Men, Women, and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

frontiers' and commodity chains created by expanding commercial activities, productive enterprises, and settlement 'underpinned deep structures in the architecture of the British Empire' and the Atlantic World more broadly.³¹ In the words of Jacob Price 'when one looks at particular trades, one cannot but be impressed by the interdependence of the parts'.³² The fur trade, for example, linked the blanket makers of Witney in Oxfordshire, Brazilian and Virginian tobacco plantations, and the slave ports of Africa and Aboriginal peoples in the remote, sub-arctic regions of North America, as well as metropolitan hatters and furriers, and affluent consumers in Britain and the wider world. Commodity histories have become fashionable over the past decade and have focused on a broad range of commodities including cochineal, cod, coffee, cotton, sugar, vanilla, wine, and many others.³³ These studies can, however, sometimes fail to connect with wider historiographical questions or, as Frank Trentmann points out, can over-reach themselves in their assessments of wider global developments.³⁴ This thesis is not an exhaustive 'commodity history', rather it explores how the organisation of the British fur trade contributed to the emergence of monopoly and the persistence of a chartered company in the trade. In so doing, the study sheds light on stages of the commodity trade that have been neglected, especially European distribution and retail channels. Analysing these aspects allows the trade to be compared to other commercial activities and for it to be situated within the growing body of literature on the eighteenth-century 'consumer revolution'.³⁵

In all, the study covers a total of 39 years. The study begins in 1783 as this marked the end of the American War of Independence and because the literature on the fur trade,

³¹ Beinart and Lotte, *Environment*, p. 2.

³² Jacob M. Price, 'What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660-1790', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (1989), p. 277.

³³ For instance, see Elizabeth Abbott, *Sugar: A Bittersweet History* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2009); Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate*, Second Edition (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007); Tim Ecott, *Vanilla: Travels in Search of the Ice Cream Orchid* (London: Penguin Books, 2004); Amy Butler Greenfield, *A Perfect Red: Empire, Espionage, and the Quest for the Colour of Desires* (London: Doubleday, 2005); David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* (London: Cape, 1998); and Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For several short discussions on commodities that 'changed the world' see Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present*, Second Edition (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2006).

³⁴ Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), pp. 79-80.

³⁵ In particular, see John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993).

and British overseas trade in general, has focused on the pre-revolutionary period. The year in which the HBC acquired a monopoly of the British fur trade largely determined 1821 as the end point of the thesis. It could be argued that continuing beyond this date would allow for the impact of this development to be assessed but the changes that occurred in the HBC's record-keeping following its merger with the NWC complicates such a task. The period between 1783 and 1821 was a period of rapid westward expansion in the fur trade, a circumstance that was in part facilitated by declining reserves of beaver in the 'Canadian Shield'. The NWC, building upon the legacy of French fur traders, was at the forefront of this drive towards the Pacific North-West coast. In contrast, the HBC was rather slow to develop its inland trading activities but ultimately did so by changing its labour practices and logistical operations. New leadership among the London Committee gave further impetus to the Company's competitiveness in North America and promoted the establishment of the Red River Settlement, the first attempt at colonisation within the land covered by the Company's Charter. Another key theme of this period was the centralisation of the Montreal fur trade under the control of the NWC and, of course, the Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic Wars, and War of 1812, with their adverse effects on the conduct of the fur trade in North America and the distribution of furs to European markets. These developments occurred in step with the long-term expansion of hat manufacturing in provincial Britain, especially in Lancashire and Cheshire, as well as the growth in Liverpool's Atlantic trade.³⁶

The records contained in the archives of the HBC supply many of the primary sources used in this study.³⁷ Included in the collection are a wide array of minute books, trading ledgers, letters, and employment records that relate to the HBC and the NWC. The sheer size of the collection precludes a full survey of available material. And while the years covered by the records are generally very informative, they are not comprehensive. The trade data contained within the British customs' records at The

³⁶ By the late eighteenth century, Bristol's Atlantic trade had stagnated and the growth in Glasgow's Atlantic trade was not as pronounced as it was in Liverpool. On eighteenth-century Atlantic trade and the British outports see P. G. E. Clemens, 'The Rise of Liverpool, 1665-1750', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1976), pp. 211-55; T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities c.1740-90* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1975); Francis E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: An economic history of a port, 1790-1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971); Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Jacob M. Price, 'The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1954), pp. 177-99.

³⁷ For an excellent discussion of the records available in the Company's archives see Deidre Simmons, *Keepers of the Record: The History of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

National Archives, Kew, complement the resources contained in the HBC archive. The customs' ledgers provide a near-complete coverage of British imports, exports, and re-exports for the 39 years covered by the thesis. When used in conjunction with the HBC's archives, these records open up a rich vein of information on the circulation and distribution of furs and their related manufactures across and beyond the North-Atlantic World. These records are, however, less useful for analysing the factors that led to the continuation of a chartered company in the trade, or to reveal how fur-related apparel was made and sold to consumers. The thesis therefore draws upon a wide range of other source material such as the Board of Trade Papers and Bankruptcy Papers at The National Archives, British trade directories, furrier and hatter records at London Metropolitan Archives, the minute books of the Feltmakers' and Skinners' Companies at the Guildhall Library, newspapers, documents relating to the blanket makers of Witney at Oxfordshire History Centre, various sorts of parliamentary papers, and the correspondence with government officials contained in the collections of the British Library.

The thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter one provides a synoptic history of the fur trade from ancient times through to the rise of the Atlantic fur trade. It discusses the factors that made the fur trade highly specialised, especially in terms of the organisation of the trade, the method of exchange used with Aboriginal peoples, and the labour required to conduct the trade. Chapter two uses trade data contained in the British customs' records to analyse Britain's fur imports. Such a task allows for a comparative assessment of the volume of the Hudson's Bay and Montreal fur trades and can be used as a reasonable proxy for the extent of ecological exhaustion in the trade. The balance of trade between the two concerns and the decline of the beaver population were both important factors that influenced the post-1821 structure of the trade. The chapter concludes by evaluating the factors that contributed towards the union of the HBC and NWC in 1821, and the political manoeuvring that enabled the HBC to acquire a monopoly of the British fur trade. Chapter three explores the HBC's commodity export trade, detailing the relationships that the Company forged with metropolitan and provincial tradespeople when sourcing its trade goods and provisions. Although the surviving source basis makes the identification of such links especially difficult, a number of comparisons with the relationships established by the London Houses that supplied the NWC can be drawn. The analysis sheds light on the HBC's tendency to form long-lasting relationships

with its suppliers and the reasons why British merchants and manufacturers did not seek to reform the British fur trade.

Chapter four looks at the British re-export trade in furs, the ways in which the HBC and NWC sold their furs, and the buyers who purchased these commodities from the companies. There were marked differences in the channels through which the two companies managed their fur sales and it has been suggested that the NWC had an advantage over the chartered company in this regard because it had greater flexibility over the markets in which its furs were sold. This hypothesis is tested and it is determined whether the re-export trade, divergent sale arrangements, or the buyers themselves influenced the emergence of monopoly in the trade. Chapter five surveys the manufacture of fur garments and accessories and their retail to consumers, and asks whether there were factors of production and distribution that encouraged the formation of monopoly. Apart from the use of beaver hats, very little is known about the other items that were made from fur and so this section breaks new ground by expanding analysis to these neglected articles. Chapter six uncovers another aspect of the fur trade that is rarely covered in the extant literature: the consumption practices of the HBC's overseas servants. The success of the Company's enterprise depended upon the labour of these distant employees who worked in a very unforgiving, isolated environment. The highly specialised skills that these servants developed were crucial to the Company, and they became even more important as the Company attempted to develop its interior trade. Keeping these servants loyal to the Company was imperative. Supplying its servants with material goods that made life in Hudson's Bay more tolerable was one method used to encourage servants to remain in the Company's employ. The rich employment and accountancy records in the Company's archives allows for a detailed examination of the servants' consumer behaviour and provides a novel way in which to add to debates over the eighteenth-century 'consumer revolution'.

The study that follows is not a definitive commodity history but it does show that the 1821 resolution in the British fur trade was more significant than is currently recognised, and that the fur trade itself offers a fruitful way in which to deepen our understanding of commerce and consumption across the Atlantic.

A Highly Specialised Trade

In the boardroom of Hudson's Bay House, the London headquarters of the HBC at Nos. 3 and 4 Fenchurch Street, the major shareholders of the Company gathered on Thursday 30 May 1811 to vote on the proposal to grant Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, 116,000 square miles for the creation of a colony at Red River in North America.¹ Selkirk, who had joined the Company in 1808 as a major shareholder, was well-known for his pro-emigration views and proposed that the colony would provide the Company with hundreds of able-bodied men and supply the Company's posts with agricultural produce and so reduce the costs of importing British provisions.² Selkirk, together with his wife's brother Andrew Wedderburn Colville who was also a relatively new addition to Company's list of proprietors, persuaded the majority of the Company's old guard to back the plan. Over two-thirds (£29,937) of the total shares present at the meeting were cast in favour of the scheme.³ It was agreed that Selkirk could settle Scottish Highlanders in the colony in return for supplying the Company with provisions and 200 servants each year, as well as accommodating the families of retired Company servants.⁴ The out-voted faction was made up of individuals involved in the Montreal fur trade, several of whom were not entitled to vote on account of them having held their stock for less than six months.⁵ Among the disgruntled faction stood Edward Ellice and Alexander Mackenzie, who no doubt warned the Committee that the NWC would see the establishment of the colony as a provocative action, especially since the territory in question covered the route

¹ See HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fos. 33-8.

² Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 7, 101-2. In 1803, Selkirk attempted to settle 800 Highlanders on Prince Edward Island and later tried to enact two similar schemes in Upper Canada, one at Moulton on Lake Erie and another at Baldoon on Lake St. Clair. See Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 199.

³ According to the minute books of the London Committee, Selkirk owned £4,087. worth of Company stock and Wedderburn owned £4,474 worth. In the case of Selkirk, this is somewhat less than the one-third of the Company's total stock as suggested by Rich. See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 300-1.

⁴ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 7; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 300-1.

⁵ HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fos. 33-8.

that the Montreal traders used to access the interior. While it cannot be said with certainty as to whether this ulterior motive served to produce such strong support for the scheme amongst the Company's shareholders, the fact that the representatives of the NWC were at the meeting does suggest that all those present were at the very least made aware of the destabilising effect that the Colony could have on the British fur trade. What the granting of the Red River Colony undoubtedly does show, however, is that the environment of Hudson's Bay and the labour required for the trade were two concerns that made the fur trade a highly specialised enterprise.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the attributes that made the fur trade a commercial activity that encouraged the formation of large-scale and monopolistic forms of business organisation. By 1763, Britain had established ascendancy in the Atlantic fur trade through its control of a group of North American colonies that had been established by the British or conquered from other colonial empires. These included the Thirteen Colonies, 'Canada', and Hudson's Bay.⁶ While the British continued to operate within the American fur trade following the independence of the United States, it is the Montreal and Hudson's Bay fur trades that are the main focus here. The chapter explains the divergent forms of trade organisation used in each of these trades and assesses why they took the form they did. It also explores the different approaches used in the exchanges with Aboriginal peoples and the workforce regimes established by the HBC and Montreal fur traders. The chapter therefore provides a substantial amount of historical context for the rest of the thesis but does so analytically by arguing that there were several factors that made the fur trade a highly specialised trade which, in turn, promoted the emergence of monopoly.

The first part of the chapter documents the emergence of the Atlantic fur trade and British involvement in the trade in the Thirteen Colonies, Hudson's Bay, and Canada. The second section analyses the organisation of the British fur trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially the management and financing of the trade and

⁶ It is also important to point out that what contemporaries described as 'Canada' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries specifically referred to the former French province of Quebec, which included the key fur-trading town of Montreal. In the Constitutional Act of 1791, the British partitioned the Province of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada included the British territory in the immediate vicinity of the Great Lakes, which became a prime area for new British settlement, whereas Lower Canada composed the largely French settlements that spanned the length of the St. Lawrence River. When 'Canada' is used in this thesis it thus refers to the Province of Quebec (Upper and Lower Canada from 1791) and does not extend to the other British territories in North America which includes Cape Breton, the Coast of Labrador New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward's Island, all of which were marginal in the fur trade at this time.

its methods of transportation. The third section focuses on the exchanges with Aboriginal peoples and examines the commercial strategies that were employed by British fur traders. The fourth and final section sheds light on the recruitment, labour, and working environment of the men that were employed in the British fur trade.

I. *The Rise of the British Fur Trade*

Furs were the epitome of noble fashions in late medieval England. Unrivalled in their style, elegance, and the comfort they afforded in cold medieval castles, furs trimmed and lined gowns of all seasons.⁷ This was certainly not an English phenomenon as members of the ruling courts across Western Europe, from Burgundy to the Italian city-states, clad themselves in the latest fur-bearing ensembles.⁸ An individual's wealth and rank was reflected by the number of furs in their possession, so much so that some of the richest nobles not only clad their families in the luxury apparel but used them to embellish their entire retinues and even their horses. These extravagant furs were not, for the most part, sourced from England's own shores. They originated from sub-arctic climes where the harsh winters dictated that the animal furs would be thicker and were thus considered superior to those harvested in warmer temperatures. In the medieval period, Russia and the Baltic were the principal sources of Britain's fine furs but this trade was largely in the hands of foreign merchants, most notably the German Hanse. In the late fourteenth century, approximately 90 per cent of London's fur imports were of Hanseatic origin.⁹ In association with Novgorod, the northernmost of the Russian principalities, the Hanse established a near-monopoly of the fur trade in the Baltic Sea, with the city of Lübeck acting as the central entrepôt of the trade.¹⁰ Thus the fur trade was, from an early age, an international operation that spanned immense distance.¹¹

⁷ Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, Second Edition (London: London Record Society, 2003), pp. 1-3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, 135-6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70; and Janet Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: The Fur Trade and its Significance for Medieval Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 49-52, 62-5, 68, 81, 159.

¹⁰ Raymond H. Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade, 1550-1700* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1943), pp. 3-7; Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750-1200* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 331-2; and Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia 980-1584*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 76-7, 184-5, 200-1.

¹¹ Evidence has been uncovered which points towards a fur trade between Ancient Rome and Scandinavia and the Viking Rus are known to have ventured down the Volga River with fine furs to trade at Bulgar. See Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (London: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 158-9.

Hanseatic dominance over the import of furs into England waned in the sixteenth century as relations between the Hanse and the English crown declined. The privileges of the merchant league were revoked and more concerted efforts were made by British merchants to develop the country's overseas trade.¹² The Company of Merchant Adventurers to New Lands was established in London in 1551 and soon discovered a sea-route to Arkhangelsk, after which it was re-chartered as the Muscovy Company in 1555.¹³ Furs, however, never comprised a significant part of the new Company's trade, which considered them to be 'dead wares', preferring instead to concentrate on timber, tar, hemp, and other raw materials that were central to the construction of naval vessels.¹⁴ The Company's ambivalence to trading furs is indicative of a decline in the demand for furs in high-quality garment manufacture, as velvets and silks increasingly became the status symbol of choice for the English aristocracy.¹⁵ While the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were the 'age of squirrel' and martens were especially popular in the fifteenth century, the second-half of the sixteenth century witnessed the rapid disappearance of furs from fashionable wardrobes, exemplified in the case of Queen Elizabeth I who only wore fur-lined clothing at the beginning of her reign.¹⁶

The English demand for furs in the following century no doubt floundered but the mid-seventeenth century heralded a new chapter in the trade as the felting and hatting industries expanded in a number of European centres as a result of the exploitation of new supplies of furs from the New World and the diffusion of manufacturing techniques westward from Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁷ Indeed, the development of the fur trade in North America shifted the centre of the trade away from Russia and the Baltic and towards the ports of Amsterdam, London, and La Rochelle, which handled increasing volumes of the burgeoning Atlantic trades. However, unlike France and the United Provinces, England was particularly slow at capitalising on the fur trade in North America. From New Netherland in North America, the Dutch conducted a thriving fur trade between 1609 and 1664, symbolised in the use of a beaver in the colony's seal, before the colony

¹² For an authoritative account of diplomatic relations between the Hanse and England see T. H. Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse, 1157-1611: A Study of their Trade and Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹³ Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, pp. 146-7, 171.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7, 171.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8, 66-9, 134-43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80; and Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 2-3, 9-10.

was eventually ceded to the English.¹⁸ Further north, French merchants took advantage of the great potential for fur-trading on the Saint Lawrence River, after the explorations of Jacques Cartier in the 1530s and 1540s.¹⁹ By the end of the seventeenth century, Montreal had become the site of an annual ‘Great Rendezvous’ that attracted as many as 800 Odawas for the purposes of fur-trading.²⁰

English participation in the fur trade did not commence in earnest until the late seventeenth century when New Netherland fell into English hands. Dutch traders, however, still played a dominant role in the colony’s fur trade up until the mid-eighteenth century, largely meeting the Iroquois traders at Albany until the 1720s when the meeting-point shifted towards the outpost of Oswego on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario.²¹ The British colonists at Pennsylvania also attempted to tap into the prime furs of beaver, otter, and marten that were available via trading at the Great Lakes but the governors of New York successfully maintained that the interference of another colony in diplomacy with the Iroquois Confederacy would threaten the security of all the mainland colonies.²² Instead, Pennsylvanian traders focused their attention on the deer trade to the south.²³ Shipments of furs from the Thirteen Colonies remained considerable throughout the eighteenth century and provided a ready source of cash that was particularly useful in the early years of the fledging colonies.²⁴

In 1670, the HBC, or to provide its official title, the ‘Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson’s Bay’, was established by a group of 18 adventurers in London who, with the support of Prince Rupert, were granted a royal charter by King Charles II that same year.²⁵ This charter conferred to the Company and its successors:

the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas, Streights, Bays, Rivers, Lakes, Creeks, and Sounds, in whatsoever Latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the Streights commonly called Hudson’s Streights, together with all the Lands, Countries and Territories, upon the Coasts and

¹⁸ Norton, *Fur Trade*, pp. 3-5; and Rich, ‘Russia’, pp. 307-28.

¹⁹ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 2-4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 19.

²¹ Norton, *Fur trade*, pp. 43, 50-4.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1. For an illuminating account of the role of the Indian Superintendent in maintaining alliances with the Iroquois of the Mohawk Valley and the gifts that were bestowed upon tribal leaders see Timothy J. Shannon, ‘Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 344-84.

²³ Norton, *Fur trade*, pp. 50-1.

²⁴ Rich, ‘Russia’, pp. 308-9, 325.

²⁵ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 1, p. 53.

Confines of the Seas, Streights, Bays, Lakes, Rivers, Creeks and Sounds, aforesaid, which are not now actually possessed by any of our Subjects, or by the Subjects of any other Christian Prince or State.²⁶

In his classic two-volume history of the HBC, E. E. Rich convincingly argued that the Company's Charter 'has always been something of an enigma in the history of the Company, and has deluded both its supporters and its opponents'.²⁷ The Charter, he argued, should be interpreted as a grant of rights and not specific duties; it did not compel the Company to promote settlement or exploration.²⁸ In Rich's view, it was a trading colony not a colony of settlement that was granted to the Company.²⁹ This 'trading colony' encompassed the exclusive right to trade in and on the shores of the tributaries that flowed into the Hudson Straits, a huge area that included Hudson's Bay and its entire water basin which extended the Company's privileges into the interior of North America, a region that was more commonly known to contemporaries as Rupert's Land. In 1670, however, contemporaries had limited geographic knowledge with which to comprehend the full scale of the territory to which the Charter referred.³⁰

In practice, the Company's Charter was not, as Rich suggested, simply a case of the Company holding the exclusive right to trade within a specified territory. A number of contemporaries and later historians have contended that the Company actually owned Rupert's Land and not just the sole right to trade within it.³¹ In 1821, Edward Ellice came to the conclusion that the Company held 'proprietary rights' over its chartered territory and this was a judgement that he reaffirmed at the 1857 Parliamentary Committee into the Company's affairs.³² Ultimately, this was the interpretation that the British legislature took when negotiating the terms upon which the Company would 'surrender' Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada in 1870, the latter of which was required to pay the Company £300,000 for the acquisition.³³ The crux of the matter is that the meaning and legality of the Company's Charter was contested right up until the Company relinquished

²⁶ Anon., *Charter and Supplemental Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company* (London: Printed by Sir Joseph Causton & Sons, 1884), pp. 1-29.

²⁷ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, pp. 56-7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁰ Rupert's Land composed around one-third of the territory of modern Canada.

³¹ For instance, see Elizabeth Mancke, 'Chartered Enterprises and the Evolution of the British Atlantic World', in Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, eds., *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), especially p. 247.

³² *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), p. 328.

³³ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, p. 155.

its chartered privileges.³⁴ The Charter's ambiguity partly explains why — during the period of this study — the Company did not seek to prosecute the NWC for trading in Rupert's Land and why the NWC did not challenge the HBC's Charter in a Court of Law.

It is similarly important to emphasise that the HBC did not, as some historians have claimed, possess a monopoly of the British fur trade before 1821.³⁵ In London, the HBC was in open competition with furs from the Thirteen Colonies (the United States after 1783) in addition to those from Canada after 1763.³⁶ From its very inception the HBC also faced competition within its chartered territory from southern interlopers. *Coureur de bois*, French traders who spent time travelling and living with Aboriginal communities to learn indigenous languages, survival techniques, and to develop trading relationships, consistently intruded upon the trade of the HBC as they ventured north-west from Montreal, intercepting Cree, Assiniboine, and other Aboriginal traders on their way to the Company's posts on Hudson's Bay.³⁷ There were thus two different patterns of trade. Until the late eighteenth century, the HBC's principal strategy was to entice Aboriginal traders down to its fortified trading posts on Hudson's Bay to exchange their furs for heavier goods that the Company, at this time, did not have the will, requisite knowledge, or the means with which to transport effectively into the interior.³⁸ On the other hand, the French, while establishing a Great Rendezvous at Montreal to entice indigenous communities to trade, increasingly developed a system whereby their *coureur de bois* actively sought out Aboriginal traders in the interior.³⁹ As the *coureurs* advanced further inland, their longer journeys stimulated the emergence of entrepôts at Detroit, Sault Ste. Maire, Machilimackinac, and Kaministiquia (later Fort William of the NWC) which enabled the French traders to re-supply themselves with provisions and trade goods upcountry, more commonly known as an 'outfit'.⁴⁰ This had the adverse effect of intercepting indigenous peoples on their way down to the Montreal trade fairs, leading to the latter's decline.⁴¹ The *coureurs* also impacted upon the HBC by trading with

³⁴ Uncertainty over the legality of the Company's Charter can be seen in the questions asked at the 1857 Parliamentary Committee into the Company's affairs. See *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), especially p. 337.

³⁵ For example, see Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, *The Forgotten Majority: German Merchants in London: Naturalization and Global Trade, 1660-1815*, translated by Cynthia Klohr (New York: Berghahn, 2015), p. 191.

³⁶ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, pp. 56-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 509-10; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 10-11.

³⁸ Rich, *Montreal*, p. 23; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, p. 573.

³⁹ Rich, *Montreal*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Aboriginal peoples before they reached the Company's posts on Hudson's Bay. The cessation of New France to the British in 1763 merely replaced the French bourgeois merchants of Montreal, who arranged the importation of trade goods and provided financial services, with a British mercantile elite that maintained the French style of trading and so continued to provide competition to the HBC.⁴²

By 1763 then, Britain had acquired supremacy of the North American fur trade, including that of the Thirteen Colonies, Canada, and Hudson's Bay. It should be noted, however, that the acquisition of Canada, despite its strategic significance and its importance in the fur trade, was a highly contentious policy at the time, as many opponents to the cessation argued that Guadeloupe, with its sugar, coffee, cocoa, and other plantation trades, would be of greater benefit to Britain, an episode that became known as the 'Canada versus Guadeloupe' controversy.⁴³ With the independence of the United States in 1783, Britain lost control of key fur-trading regions but this loss was, at least in the first two decades, not as severe as one might expect, as many fur traders from the former Thirteen Colonies, especially those from New York, followed the loyalist exodus and re-established themselves in Montreal, many of whom later entered into the association of partnerships that became the NWC.⁴⁴ For several decades after American independence, these loyalist traders continued to engage in a southerly trade from Montreal through the Great Lakes and towards the Mississippi.⁴⁵ While the Treaty of Paris (1783) acknowledged American sovereignty over the territories that lay to the south of the Great Lakes, Britain continued to occupy several military forts that now lay within

⁴² Ibid., pp. 43-4.

⁴³ Rich, *Montreal*, p. 39. For an account of the 'pamphlet war' that erupted in relation to the controversy see William L. Grant, 'Canada Versus Guadeloupe, An Episode of the Seven Years' War', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1912), pp. 735-43. In the Oxford History of the British Empire Peter Marshall and J. R. Ward provide two somewhat different reasons for the acquisition of Canada over Guadeloupe. Marshall sees the primary motive as securing established North American interests and reaffirms the view that there was little consideration given to the effect this would have on either France or the American colonies. On the other hand, Ward emphasises British war-weariness which angled British policy towards securing a lasting peace that was thought to be best achieved by confirming British supremacy in North America. See Peter Marshall, 'British North America, 1760-1815', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. 2. The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 372-93; and J. R. Ward, 'The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. 2. The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 415-39.

⁴⁴ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 63-70. For an account of prior dealings and activities of some of the loyalist emigrants who were involved in the fur trade of the Thirteen Colonies see Heather Devine, 'Roots in the Mohawk Valley: Sir William Johnson's Legacy in the North West Company', in Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1994), pp. 217-42.

⁴⁵ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 35-6, 47, 54-9; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 177.

the jurisdiction of the United States such as Detroit, Grand Portage, and Michilimackinac.⁴⁶ Under the terms of Jay's Treaty (1794) — which was an effort to resolve unsettled commercial and territorial issues from the Treaty of Paris (1783) — Britain withdrew its military forces from the occupied outposts, but by this time the population of fur-bearing animals in the Great Lakes had been heavily depleted; only deer were a significant pelt that was traded in the region from this point forth.⁴⁷ While the United States gradually assumed control of the fortifications to the south of the Great Lakes, trade in this region and in the uncharted Mississippi was still open to both American citizens and British subjects.⁴⁸ Indeed, Canadian traders conducted a thriving trade after the signing of the Treaty, which not only reached into Illinois country but stretched further west into Louisiana.⁴⁹

The rise of British control over the supply of North American furs was accompanied by comparable shifts in their distribution to prime European markets. The Dutch, despite forfeiting their only fur-trading colony, established themselves as key intermediaries in the fur trade in the late seventeenth century. Indeed, so important was the Dutch role that the British state allowed furs from New York to be exported directly to the United Provinces, until the enumeration of furs in 1722.⁵⁰ The Dutch primarily became middlemen in the fur trade as a result of an over-accumulation of *parchment* beaver in England and France, *parchment* being an English term that was applied to beaver furs that had not been worn by the Aboriginal trappers of the furs, and thus the pelts still held their under-fur as well as their long guard hairs.⁵¹ This made the skin stiff and unworkable as the act of wearing the furs filled the hairs with sweat down to the roots of the fur and wore off the long guard hairs which made the skin pliant, hence the term *coat* beaver.⁵² The solution was to comb the 'beaver wool' from the undercoat of the raw skins which also left the long fine guard hairs on the pelt.⁵³ This provided two valuable products; 'combed beaver' that was prized for trimming garments and for wearing, and 'beaver wool' that was used in felt- and hat-making.⁵⁴ However, unlike in Russia, the technique

⁴⁶ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 56-9; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 177.

⁴⁷ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 58-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 199.

⁴⁹ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 199.

⁵⁰ Norton, *Fur trade*, pp. 102, 110; and Rich, 'Russia', p. 311.

⁵¹ Rich, 'Russia', pp. 311-3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

remained unknown in Western Europe until the early eighteenth century.⁵⁵ The Dutch therefore developed a system whereby they shipped colonial furs from France and Britain to Arkhangelsk and Narva, where it was processed and then re-exported back to North-West Europe.⁵⁶

Even before the *Nonsuch*, the first voyage chartered by the HBC, sailed to Hudson's Bay, English merchants were already sending small consignments of furs for processing to Russia.⁵⁷ In 1694, the HBC started to send considerable quantities of furs to agents in Hamburg for direct shipment to Arkhangelsk and Narva.⁵⁸ These ventures were, for the most part, successful but they involved complex negotiation of bills of exchange and the handling of return cargoes.⁵⁹ Indeed, when the private dealings of some of the Company's associates were muddled with the Company's own ventures and proved both costly and frustratingly difficult to disentangle, the Company gradually withdrew its direct trade to Russia, opting first to sell them in Amsterdam before purely returning to the use of sales in London.⁶⁰ From 1682 to 1713, the Russia trade operated by the Dutch and partly by the HBC, served to clear the glut of furs in North-West Europe and thus brought stability to western markets.⁶¹ The elaborate route was, however, full of risk and uncertainties that were exacerbated by warfare.⁶² For these 30 years, British and French fur traders were predominantly dependent on Dutch access to Russian markets as their manufactories were not sophisticated enough and domestic demand was not large enough to absorb the volume of furs imported from North America. The trade required a reserve market that Russia initially provided but the growth in the felting and hatting industries in Paris, London, and other centres, alongside the diffusion of the 'combing' technique, created new and expanding outlets in the form of manufactured beaver and felt hats that found ready markets at home and abroad.⁶³ For centuries Russia had acted as the supplier of furs to Western Europe but the resource depletion of the fur-bearing regions of 'European Russia' forced the Russian fur trade further east. By the late eighteenth century, Siberia

⁵⁵ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 19; and Rich, 'Russia', pp. 327-8.

⁵⁶ Rich, 'Russia', pp. 307-28.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 320, 323-4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 326-7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 307, 316.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 311, 327-8.

and Alaska supplied the vast majority of the pelts used in the Russian fur trade.⁶⁴ Rather than the distant European market, Russian traders sent these furs to northern China where they were exchanged for tea, silks, and other China goods.⁶⁵ During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Chinese demand for foreign furs increased as a result of population growth, urbanisation, and the Qing nobility's interest in foreign consumer goods.⁶⁶ The Chinese fashioned these fur imports into fur cloaks and trimmings, and they were especially prized in northern China as a way to keep warm during the particularly cold winters.⁶⁷

By the late eighteenth century, British merchants had become the main supplier and distributor of North American furs, a far cry from the late medieval period when the German Hanse dominated the international networks of the fur trade and when Russia and the Baltic were the primary suppliers of luxury furs to the European continent. Even so, Britain's position as the leading fur-trading nation was not guaranteed. In the following decades the British fur trade faced numerous threats to its successful continuation. The newly independent United States began to assert her territorial boundaries, gradually excluding British traders access to the fur-trading regions that lay to the south of the Great Lakes and towards the Mississippi. While the Americans fortified their own fur trade, the trades operated from Montreal and Hudson's Bay faced the prospect of decline in the midst of intense competition between rival traders, the disruptive impact of the war of 1812, and the depletion of the very resource that underpinned the enterprise. Before considering these challenges in the next chapter, however, it is first necessary to discuss exactly how the fur trades of Hudson's Bay and Canada were organised.

II. The Organisation of the Hudson Bay and Canadian Fur Trades

The HBC had, by 1783, developed a sophisticated mechanism with which to manage its transatlantic ventures. As was customary for British chartered joint-stock companies, the

⁶⁴ John F. Richards, *The World Hunt: An Environmental History of the Commodification of Animals* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), pp. 55-84.

⁶⁵ For accounts of the Russian fur trade see Fisher, *Russian Fur Trade*; Clifford M. Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin: Russia's Trade with China and Its Setting, 1727-1805* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); and Natalie B. Stoddard, 'Some Ethnological Aspects of the Russian Fur Trade', in Malvina Bolus, ed., *People and Pelts: Selected Papers of the Second North American Fur Trade Conference* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1972), pp. 39-58.

⁶⁶ Yangwen Zheng, *China on the Sea: How the Maritime World Shaped Modern China* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 207-43.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-5.

Figure 1.1. View of Hudson's Bay House on Fenchurch Street, c.1820.

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copyright restrictions.

Source: LMA, Collage Record No. 3050, 'View of Hudson's Bay House on Fenchurch Street by Valentine Davis', c.1820.

HBC was headquartered in London and established a permanent, centralised base of operations soon after its creation. In 1696 the Company acquired its first long-term lease of premises on the north side of Fenchurch Street, situated at the upper end of Culver Court, which became known as Hudson's Bay House.⁶⁸ Prior to this move, the Company's shareholders had met at Prince Rupert's House, Garraway's Coffee House,

⁶⁸ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, p. 41.

and Scrivener's Hall.⁶⁹ The Company remained at Culver's Court until 1794, when Hudson's Bay House was relocated to Nos. 3 and 4 Fenchurch Street.⁷⁰ It is not clear why the Company chose to move at this time. It may be because the Company's premises and the adjoining warehouse had become too small.⁷¹ The new Hudson's Bay House directly faced onto Fenchurch Street and was thus more prominently placed than the secluded grounds of Culver's Court. With the headquarters of the EIC just a short walk away on Leadenhall Street and the Bank of England on Threadneedle Street, the Company was firmly embedded in the vibrant hub of eighteenth-century commerce. The façade of the new premises had a simple, elegant design and was a fine display of brickwork (Figure 1.1).⁷² As is the case today, architecture was an effective way for eighteenth-century institutions to enhance their status and communicate particular messages to onlookers. Margaret Makepeace has revealed that the EIC purposefully hired architects to create well-designed buildings in which to situate its warehouses in order to impress observers and dignitaries.⁷³ While not as grand or imposing as East India House, the subtle refinement of the HBC's headquarters suggests that the Company attempted to cultivate an image of propriety and sound management that bears much similarity to Adam Smith's favourable depiction of the Company. Smith reasoned that the HBC as:

a joint stock company, consisting of a small number of proprietors, with a moderate capital, approaches very nearly to the nature of a private copartnery, and may be capable of nearly the same degree of vigilance and attention'.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 5, 38-9.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷¹ The Company also had a warehouse at Radcliff Cross on Narrow Street, Limehouse. The warehouse was destroyed by fire on 16 December 1779 but was rebuilt the following year. See LMA, CLC/B/192/F/040/MS15040/003, *Statement by Captain Joseph Richards concerning a fire in a warehouse of the Hudson's Bay Company in Narrow Street, Limehouse, 1779*; and LMA, MR/B/C/1780/079, 'Surveyor's affidavit confirming that a warehouse 1780 erected and built in the Parish of Saint Ann, Limehouse, by the Hudson's Bay Company, meets the requirements of the Building Act', *Middlesex Sessions of the Peace: Enrolment, Registration and Deposit, 1780*.

⁷² The façade of the former Hudson's Bay House was also elegantly styled and had attracted the eye of the Scottish merchant, historian, and topographer William Maitland who described it as 'a handsome Brick Building whose Front next to the Street has been lately repaired and beautified, and carries the appearance of one of the finest pieces of Brick Work with Pilasters, Architraves, etc. in the whole City'. See William Maitland et al, *The History and Survey of London from its Foundation to the Present Time*, Vol. 2 (London: Printed for T. Osborne and J. Shipton, 1756), p. 997.

⁷³ Margaret Makepeace, *The East India Company's London Workers: Management of the Warehouse Labourers, 1800-1858* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), especially pp. 17-8, 20, 25-6.

⁷⁴ See Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, pp. 332-3.

Indeed, the street-front elevation of Hudson's Bay House was similar in design to a successful British or American counting house involved in Atlantic trade, although perhaps a little more spacious and fashionable.⁷⁵

Internally, however, the Company's headquarters were slightly different from the typical layout of an eighteenth-century counting house, the latter of which usually consisted of at least an entrance hall, counting room, drawing room, store room, and the merchant's living quarters.⁷⁶ Hudson's Bay House was in fact spread over two buildings. The first was the headquarters of the Company which contained the residence of the secretary and his office, the accountant's office, and a large entrance hall and lobby which led to the boardroom.⁷⁷ The construction of the latter was immediately commenced upon the move to the new premises in 1794. The second building consisted of a warehouse, the warehouse keeper's office and premises, and a book room.⁷⁸ The boardroom was necessitated by the need for a space large enough to accommodate the Company's shareholders at the annual general meeting that took place in November or December each year. The inclusion of an on-site warehouse probably derived from the Committee's wish to keep a watchful eye on the Company's high-value furs, as well as to enable the Company's sales to be conducted from the House itself.⁷⁹ It is, however, the size of the Company's administration that most separates it from the typical merchant firm of the period. The secretary, accountant, and warehouse keeper each either had an assistant or clerk so that the Company had, at the very least, a minimum of six permanent salaried managers (excluding the Committee members). If the chiefs of the Company's posts in Hudson's Bay are included, the total reaches as high as twenty. As Ann Carlos and Stephen Nicholas have pointed out, few late-nineteenth-century multinationals had an administration greater than the HBC did in the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ The reason for this unusually large administration — albeit small in comparison to the EIC — was because the Company directly undertook a large number of the transactions that were involved in the operation of the fur trade.

⁷⁵ On the architecture and layout of American and British counting houses involved in Atlantic trade see Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 90-104; and Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, pp. 224-35.

⁷⁶ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, pp. 224-35.

⁷⁷ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, pp. 85, 87.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁷⁹ David Hancock has argued that the use and layout of merchant counting houses reflected the necessity of close supervision of business operations. See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 101.

⁸⁰ Carlos and Nicholas, 'Chartered Trading Companies', p. 403.

For instance, from November to April each year, the London Committee placed orders with British merchants and manufacturers for trading goods to supply to its trading posts in North America and for provisions to provide to its overseas servants, which were more commonly known as the annual 'outfit'. Along with parcels for the Company's servants, many of which were sent from their friends and relatives in Britain, these commodity exports were packed and loaded onto the Company's ships in time for their departure to Hudson's Bay in late May or early June.⁸¹ Unlike most other British chartered companies, the HBC owned its own ships.⁸² The Company was, therefore, required to purchase and maintain its vessels, although its fleet only numbered between two and four vessels between 1783 and 1821.⁸³ On the outbound voyage to Hudson's Bay, the captains of the Company's ships traded with Inuit communities as they passed through Hudson Strait, and these exchanges were conducted according to detailed instructions from the London Committee.⁸⁴ The ships arrived at the Company's major posts in Hudson's Bay between mid-August and mid-September.⁸⁵ Since Hudson's Bay froze over for much of the year, there was only a small window of opportunity to unload the annual outfit from the ships, load the seasons fur returns, and safely navigate out of the Bay. By 1783, the Company was developing its inland trading operations so that the Company's factories on Hudson's Bay increasingly served as distribution centres rather than points of trade themselves. Specific consignments of provisions and trading goods were made up at the coastal posts for the inland trade and, as the bay-side posts were strategically located at the mouths of rivers, were transported by canoe into the interior. Throughout the year, Aboriginal peoples visited the Company's trading posts to exchange furs for woollen textiles, alcohol, tobacco, and many other commodities. With the return of the Company's ships, which usually docked at Ratcliff or Gravesend on the River Thames between mid-October and early December, the imported furs were sorted,

⁸¹ HBCA, C.4/1, *Ships' Movements Book*, 1719-1929, fos. 13-9.

⁸² Ann M. Carlos, *The North American Fur Trade, 1804-1821: A Study in the Life-Cycle of a Duopoly* (London: Garland, 1986), p. 27.

⁸³ HBCA, C.4/1, *Ships' Movements Book*, 1719-1929, fos. 13-9. On the purchase, building, and repair of the Company's ships see numerous entries in the Company's minute books. For instance, see HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 5, 7, 129; HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fos. 11, 117; HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 28; and HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fo. 81.

⁸⁴ William Barr, 'The Eighteenth Century Trade between the Ships of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Hudson Strait Inuit', *Arctic*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (1994), pp. 236-46.

⁸⁵ HBCA, C.4/1, *Ship's Movements Book*, 1719-1929, fos. 13-19.

graded, placed into lots, and sold at auction.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Company had to manage and remit wages to its existing workforce, as well as continually recruit new servants.

The successful coordination of these numerous transactions — many of which took place thousands of miles away from Fenchurch Street — led the Company to develop complex administrative structures.⁸⁷ While not as extensive as those established by the EIC, the HBC had at least two London sub-committees: the Committee of Sale and a committee to settle tradesmen's bills.⁸⁸ In Hudson's Bay, the Chiefs and Masters of the Company's posts, often with the assistance of a clerk (or 'writer' as they were known until the early nineteenth century), had to maintain a post journal, a post account book, and write a report on the social and economic conditions of their district. In addition to their report and a copy of local correspondence, every year each post was required to send a copy of their journal and account book to London. The Company's secretary and accountant then used these records to ensure that the London Committee were kept well-informed of the Company's North American operations. Indeed, it was not until 1821 that Nicholas Garry became the first member of the London Committee to visit Hudson's Bay.⁸⁹

Very little is known about the members of the Company's Committee. In total, the Committee consisted of the Governor, Deputy-Governor, and seven other members. They met in Hudson's Bay House every Wednesday at 11:45 AM, although there were usually fewer meetings when the Company's ships were on their annual voyage to Hudson's Bay, especially during the months of July, August, and September.⁹⁰ There are three features of the Committee that have been established. The first is the committee members' longevity of service.⁹¹ Indeed, for over half of the eighteenth century, four members of the Lake family served as the Company's Governor.⁹² Secondly, from the Company's early years, there was a close relationship between Committee members and the Royal

⁸⁶ HBCA, C.4/1, *Ships' Movements Book*, 1719-1929, fos. 13-9.

⁸⁷ For an excellent discussion of the records created by the Company during the course of its trade see Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, especially pp. 16-32, 42-82, 89-92.

⁸⁸ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fos. 68, 136; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, p. 310. On the EIC's central administration see H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 186-7.

⁸⁹ John McFarland, 'Nicholas Garry', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 8* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

⁹⁰ Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, p. 87.

⁹¹ Mike Wagner, 'Asleep by a Frozen Sea or Financial Innovator? The Hudson's Bay Company, 1714-63', *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2014), p. 186.

⁹² Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, p. 96.

Society.⁹³ Samuel Wegg, for example, was Governor of the Company from 1780 to 1799, and he had previously served on the council of the Society.⁹⁴ Thirdly, some Committee members extended short-term credit to the Company.⁹⁵ For instance, on 19 November 1794, Richard Neave loaned £3,000 to the Company at a rate of 4 per cent interest per annum, which was repaid two months later.⁹⁶ It should be noted, however, that for most of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was the Bank of England that supplied credit to the Company. As Ann Carlos has demonstrated, the Company's relationship with the Bank of England was hugely important to the survival of the Company, particularly during the worst years of the Napoleonic Wars in the early nineteenth century.⁹⁷ Prior to these turbulent years, however, the Company did not usually have a significant need for credit despite its lack of working capital, a circumstance that arose from the mismatch between the proceeds of its fur sales (from December to May) and the mid-year payments to its suppliers.⁹⁸ Mike Wagner has shown that the Company effectively solved this problem through temporary investments in Bank of England, East India, and South Sea securities, which were then sold off a few months later to equip the Company's ships and pay its servants' salaries.⁹⁹ For this and other reasons, Wagner argues that the Company was a 'financial innovator' and that 'its financial strength gave it a greater ability to withstand competition'.¹⁰⁰ It should be noted, however, that McTavish, Fraser & Co. — one of the London Houses that served the NWC — also invested in securities as a way to resolve their lack of working capital.¹⁰¹

While the fur trade to Hudson's Bay was conducted by a chartered company that integrated many of the transactions that the fur trade required, the Canadian fur trade

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 13-4; and Glyndwr Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and its Critics in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 20 (1970), pp. 151, 167.

⁹⁴ Williams, 'Critics', p. 168.

⁹⁵ Carlos, *Duopoly*, p. 105.

⁹⁶ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 44, 49.

⁹⁷ See Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 102-5.

⁹⁸ Wagner, 'Financial Innovator?', pp. 199-200.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 202. K. G. Davies has also pointed towards the key role played by finance in the HBC's ability to withstand competition from Montreal fur traders, claiming that the HBC was run 'by respectable members of the London financial community... [and] commanded better credit than the North Westers [NWC]'. See K. G. Davies, 'From Competition to Union', in Minnesota Historical Society, *Aspects of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967), especially p. 21.

¹⁰¹ Harry W. Duckworth, 'British Capital in the Fur Trade: John Strettell and John Fraser', in Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1994), p. 49.

involved the use of partnerships, which was the more conventional form of business organisation used in Atlantic trade.¹⁰² In the initial decade after 1763, these partnerships were between a fur trader who wintered in the interior and conducted the exchanges with Aboriginal peoples, and a merchant in Montreal or Quebec who outfitted the venture. In this way, the British continued the operation of the Canadian fur trade along much the same lines as the French had done previously, following the policy of bringing the trade to Aboriginal peoples. One key change was, however, the gradual displacement of French merchants with the ‘Old’ Subjects of the British Crown, many of whom were first generation British emigrants from the Thirteen Colonies.¹⁰³ British participation in the inland trade also increased. From 1763, so-called ‘pedlars’ (who were usually British) emerged as intermediaries between the merchants and the *coureurs*.¹⁰⁴ These ‘pedlars’ transported goods to and from Grand Portage, Michilimackinac, Kaministiquia (later Fort William of the NWC), and other interior centres. The term ‘pedlars’ was also used to describe English-speaking *coureurs*.¹⁰⁵ French-Canadians did, however, remain heavily involved in navigation and the transactions with Aboriginal communities.

These small-scale partnerships — whether between a British merchant in Montreal or Quebec and a *coureur* or pedlar — were relatively short-lived, few lasting for more than one or two years.¹⁰⁶ In order to reduce costs, in 1779 seven of these partnerships agreed to form a loose association that became known as the NWC, which became the largest fur trading enterprise in Montreal.¹⁰⁷ The Company was a fluid association and the shares allocated to each concern shifted in accordance with their relative importance and the addition or removal of other fur-trading ventures from the combination. The Company thus had no common capital. Instead each partner contributed to a collective stock of provisions and trade goods.¹⁰⁸ On the one hand, this provided the Company with a considerable pool of resources with which to conduct its ventures but it also resulted in

¹⁰² R. C. Nash, ‘The Organisation of Trade and Finance in the British Atlantic Economy, 1600-1830’, in P. A. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 96-7.

¹⁰³ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 67-70. During the time of New France, a large proportion of the furs from New York and Albany were contraband from the French traders of Montreal. It is, therefore, likely that many of the first ‘British’ merchants to enter the Montreal fur trade after 1763 had some prior connection to the New York fur trade. See Norton, *Fur Trade*, pp. 56, 59, 90-1, 121-6, 150.

¹⁰⁴ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 67-70.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-70.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9.

¹⁰⁷ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 74-5.

¹⁰⁸ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 119.

a stark lack of corporate responsibility for any unscrupulous occurrences in the trade.¹⁰⁹ The immense distance between Montreal and the interior was a key stimulus behind the need to economise. A journey between Montreal and ‘Athabasca’, the *El Dorado* of the north-west that yielded high-quality furs, totalled 2,750 miles, and it was another 1,540 miles to the mouth of the Mackenzie River.¹¹⁰ The conveyance of trade goods and furs inland required the use of complex trading routes that made extensive use of waterborne navigation. The birch-bark canoe was the craft that was most commonly used to traverse the many lakes and rivers that a voyage into the interior required. These canoes were copied from Aboriginal technology but were typically larger than those utilised by Aboriginal peoples as they were designed to carry far more lading.¹¹¹

There were two stages to a voyage into the north-west. The first stage was between Montreal and Lake Superior for which two major routes were used. The first ran up the St. Lawrence River and through the Great Lakes, and the second went up the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers, to reach Lake Nipissing where the route continued along the French River and then into Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, and finally Lake Superior.¹¹² For this journey, large canoes known as *canot du maître* were used to transport goods in bulk and they frequently travelled in brigades made of between three and six canoes.¹¹³ Schooners and sloops were also in use on the Great Lakes by the early nineteenth century and the NWC used such vessels to assist the transportation of goods from Michilimackinac and Sault Ste. Marie to the western edge of Lake Superior.¹¹⁴ For the voyages north of Lake Superior, smaller and more agile *canots du nord* were used, which carried little more than half of what the *canot du maître* did.¹¹⁵ Like the entry of the HBC’s ships into Hudson’s Bay, the seasons dictated that inland voyages were timely completed, as many of the waterways froze over during the winter.¹¹⁶

In addition to savings in the cost of transportation, the centralisation of the Montreal fur trade under the NWC made it easier to access long-term credit, and eliminated much

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 119.

¹¹⁰ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 186.

¹¹¹ The canoes were purchased from ‘canoe shops’ in Canada or were purchased from Aboriginal peoples as few labourers could spare the time to learn the art of canoe building. See Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 102-4.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 94-5.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 97, 104; and Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 187.

¹¹⁴ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 26, 94-5; and Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 188.

¹¹⁵ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, p. 97.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

of the competition over supplies and in the trade with Aboriginal peoples.¹¹⁷ In many ways the emergence of the NWC was part of the eighteenth-century ‘revolution of scale in overseas trade’, whereby a small number of merchants quickly came to dominate Atlantic trade.¹¹⁸ Although there were setbacks in the process of centralisation that saw the Canadian fur trade become concentrated in the hands of a few merchants, a series of revised agreements in 1779, 1783-4, 1787, 1792, 1798, and 1804 saw the eventual emergence of monopoly in the Montreal fur trade.¹¹⁹ The rise of the NWC was accompanied by the advent of fur-trading merchant firms in Montreal and Quebec. There were thus two forms of partnership in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Canadian fur trade: those between groups of merchants; and those between merchants and ‘wintering partners’, the latter either being coureurs or pedlars. The NWC was, therefore, a combination of these partnership forms. There were, at the very least, seven Montreal firms that were part of the NWC over the course of its existence from 1779 to 1821. These included Alexander Mackenzie & Co., Forsyth, Richardson & Co., Grant, Campion & Co., Gregory, McLeod & Co., Todd, McGill & Co., and McTavish, Frobisher & Co. (McTavish, McGillivrays & Co. from 1804).¹²⁰ It was the latter of these that was the driving force behind the NWC’s ascendancy. Formed between Simon McTavish and Joseph Frobisher in 1787, the firm, with the help of its associated wintering partners, acquired a commanding number of shares in the Company.¹²¹ McTavish, Frobisher also gradually became the main agent through which the other Montreal firms procured the supplies for their annual outfits.¹²²

The Montreal merchants thus initiated a process of vertical integration between themselves and inland fur traders, in addition to a vertical integration with their London

¹¹⁷ R. Harvey Fleming, ‘McTavish, Frobisher and Company of Montreal’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1929), particularly p. 141.

¹¹⁸ Nash, ‘British Atlantic Economy’, p. 113; Jacob M. Price and Paul G. E. Clemens, ‘A Revolution in Scale in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade, 1675-1775’, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1987), pp. 1-43; and Nuala Zahedieh, ‘Making Mercantilism Work: London Merchants and Atlantic Trade in the Seventeenth Century’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 9 (1999), pp. 143-58. In addition to sugar and tobacco, this centralisation process has also been observed in the Madeira wine trade. See David Hancock, ‘“A Revolution in the Trade”: Wine Distribution and the Development of the Infrastructure of the Atlantic Market Economy, 1703-1807’, in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 105-153; and Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, pp. 135-7.

¹¹⁹ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 117-22, 138, 190-5, 199-202, 204, 213, 230-1; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 74-80, 84-5, 89, 91-3.

¹²⁰ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 117-22, 138, 190-5, 199-202, 204, 213, 230-1; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 74-80, 84-5, 89, 91-3.

¹²¹ Rich, *Montreal*, p. 80.

¹²² Fleming, ‘McTavish, Frobisher’, pp. 136-43.

supply houses. London firms supplied, on credit, the goods required by the Montreal merchants and sold the return cargoes of furs on Montreal accounts. The Canadian fur trade was, therefore, part of the commission system that emerged in Atlantic trade from the late seventeenth century onwards.¹²³ As part of this system, British merchants served as agents who sold, on commission, consignments of goods received from American planters and merchants, and in return fulfilled their colonial clients' orders for manufactured goods and supplied them with a wide range of services, such as shipping, insurance, and finance.¹²⁴ The commission system remained a part of the Canadian fur trade until 1821, when the HBC assumed control of the trade. There were not many London firms involved in the fur trade. In fact, there were only around five that were of significance in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These included Dyer, Allan & Co., Brickwood, Pattle & Co. (latter Brickwood, Daniel & Co.), Phyn, Ellice & Inglis (later Inglis, Ellice & Co.), McTavish, Fraser & Co., and Mackenzie, Gillespie & Co.¹²⁵ These London Houses often had commercial interests outside the fur trade and were not formally within the NWC's structure.

Until 1788, Dyer, Allan & Co. and Phyn, Ellice & Inglis were the NWC's commission agents, each with an equal share of the Company's business. In this year, Dyer, Allan withdrew from the trade and Phyn, Ellice & Inglis assumed their former share of the commission trade.¹²⁶ From at least 1790, Phyn, Ellice & Inglis became closely associated with the Montreal firm of Forsyth, Richardson & Co., with ties of kinship and marriage connecting the two concerns.¹²⁷ Meanwhile, Simon McTavish and John Fraser established the London House of McTavish, Fraser in 1788, although this firm, initially at least, apparently purchased most of its goods from Brickwood, Pattle.¹²⁸ In 1792, McTavish, Frobisher edged Brickwood, Pattle and Phyn, Ellice & Inglis out of the

¹²³ Nash, 'British Atlantic Economy', p. 98.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹²⁵ After 1805, the partners of four of these firms were as follows: John Inglis, Edward Ellice, John Bellingham Inglis made up Inglis, Ellice & Co.; McTavish, Fraser & Co. was composed of John Fraser, Simon McGillivray, and John Tullok (who had retired and moved to Canada by 1814); Alexander Mackenzie, John Gillespie (who had retired by 1814), and William Parker made up Mackenzie, Gillespie & Parker; and James Daniel, Edward Colson, Joseph Todhunter, Lawrence Brickwood (who had retired by 1814), and John Brickwood (who had retired by 1814) composed Brickwood, Daniel & Co.. See TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccius v Steinberg*, 1813; and TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccius v Inglis*, 1814. Also see Duckworth, 'British Capital', pp. 39-56; Fleming, 'McTavish, Frobisher', pp. 138-40; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 69-70.

¹²⁶ Fleming, 'McTavish, Frobisher', p. 140.

¹²⁷ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 200.

¹²⁸ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 191-3; and Fernand Ouellet, 'William McGillivray', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

business of supplying the NWC, and McTavish, Frobisher used McTavish, Fraser as their commission agents.¹²⁹ McTavish, Fraser were based at 2 Suffolk Lane, Cannon Street and the premises included a warehouse.¹³⁰ In June 1794, £56,000 worth of furs was insured at Suffolk Lane, but the volume of the furs consigned to the firm evidently surpassed the available space as the insurance policy covered another £85,400 worth of furs at the warehouses of the brokers Robinson, Goat, Row & Co..¹³¹ While McTavish, Frobisher and McTavish, Fraser were separate firms, McTavish had, in essence, carried out a vertical integration of the Montreal and London branches of the fur trade. The same could also be said for Forsyth, Richardson and Phyn, Ellice & Inglis. This vertical integration process occurred throughout British Atlantic trade in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹³² Gary Spraakman and Julie Margret maintain that vertical integration in the Canadian fur trade occurred because the trade required a London firm that was capable of supplying the specific range and quality of commodities demanded by Aboriginal peoples, as well as effective sales services in London.¹³³ Harry Duckworth has, however, argued that the formation of the NWC was in part encouraged by the London merchants themselves, particularly John Strettell, whose business was the precursor to Brickwood, Pattle.¹³⁴ In 1783, Strettell's customers held half of the shares in the NWC and so, Duckworth contends, Strettell must have encouraged an arrangement that would limit competition between the furs he received from his customers.¹³⁵ Indeed, when the NWC acquired a monopoly of the Montreal fur trade in 1804, the agreement then signed stipulated that the Company's furs were not to be divided prior to their sale, despite the fact that the proceeds were to be split across three London Houses.¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 195.

¹³⁰ Duckworth, 'British Capital', p. 48.

¹³¹ *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); and LMA, CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/397/621874, 'Insured: Simon McTavish, John Fraser & Co., Suffolk Lane, Merchants', *Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Group*, 28 June 1794.

¹³² Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 16-7, 81-4, 216-20; and Gary Spraakman and Julie Margret, 'The Transfer of Management Accounting Practices from London Counting Houses to the British North American Fur Trade', *Accounting, Business and Financial History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2000), especially pp. 109, 114. On vertical integration in the madeira wine and West India sugar trades see Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, p. 133; and S. D. Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), especially pp. 139-225.

¹³³ Spraakman and Margret, 'Management Accounting Practices', p. 116.

¹³⁴ See Duckworth, 'British Capital', pp. 44-5.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, especially p. 41.

¹³⁶ Fleming, 'McTavish, Frobisher', p. 144. These London houses were Mackenzie, Gillespie & Co., Inglis, Ellice & Co., and McTavish, Fraser & Co., although it is possible that Brickwood, Daniel & Co. were also involved.

Vertical integration was further encouraged by the need for the long-term credit that underpinned the entire Canadian fur trade. The London Houses supplied goods to the Canadian firms on credit, as did the Canadian merchants to the wintering partners who similarly advanced credit to Aboriginal peoples.¹³⁷ As the search for untapped regions of high-quality furs propelled the Montreal fur traders to venture ever further into the North-West, which increased the length of the trading routes, larger amounts of capital were required for extended periods of time.¹³⁸ On average, the London Houses had to extend credit to their Montreal counterparts for around three years.¹³⁹ In the first year, the London Houses first purchased the goods for the outfit in the winter and spring, and then had to ensure that the goods reached Quebec by November before ice closed off the port.¹⁴⁰ By April, or the beginning of the second year, the goods had to have been shipped to Montreal, and thence to Grand Portage or Fort William by July, after which they were transported further inland. The goods were exchanged inland for furs during the winter and spring, and were back at Fort William for July, by which point the trade entered its third year. The furs reached Montreal in September, were sent to England in October, and were then sorted and put up for sale in the winter and spring.¹⁴¹ For the most distant posts — those that were located near Lake Athabasca or towards the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains — the trade took a fourth year, as there was not enough time before the onset of the winter freeze for the canoes to reach Fort William.¹⁴² The return on capital in the Canadian fur trade therefore took three to four years, an unusually long period in the context of eighteenth-century trade.¹⁴³ Even the Levant trade, which was the preserve of only the richest merchants, would see a return in two years.¹⁴⁴ Merchants involved in the fur trade needed a lot of capital because they had to wait a very long time for returns, and this thus promoted the emergence of a few, large merchant firms in Montreal and London. Indeed, when Dyer, Allan withdrew from the trade in 1788, Brickwood, Pattle

¹³⁷ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 69-70.

¹³⁸ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 67, 73-4.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

¹⁴² Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, p. 94.

¹⁴³ For example, in the late eighteenth century, British manufacturers offered their American customers credit of up to 18-24 months. See Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, pp. 151-2.

¹⁴⁴ Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 40, 68, 224, 226, 234.

considered the risk of taking on their business as too great, leading to the involvement of Phyn, Ellice & Inglis.¹⁴⁵

While McTavish, Frobisher and McTavish, Fraser increased their hold over the NWC and the Montreal fur trade from 1788 onwards, this centralisation of power was contested. In addition to the north-west trade, until around 1800, there was also a south-west trade that stretched from Montreal to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi. This branch of the Canadian fur trade endured a prolonged decline following the instigation of Jay's Treaty (1794), as the merchants involved in this division of the trade shifted their activities into the north-west trade. By 1791, the Canadian fur trade was highly centralised, with the three firms of Forsyth, Richardson & Co., Todd, McGill & Co., and McTavish, Frobisher reportedly controlling two-thirds of the trade.¹⁴⁶ The first two firms had largely focused on the south-west trade but in the 1790s they expanded into the north-west trade in an attempt to mitigate their losses. The NWC accommodated these new firms, in addition to another south-west firm by the name of Ogilvy, Forsyth & Co., through the signing of 'non-opposition agreements', which stipulated that their trade in the north-west was to be conducted on the Company's account and that these ventures were to be outfitted by McTavish, Frobisher.¹⁴⁷ These agreements thus did not grant full partnership status to the rival firms, but in 1795 an attempt to do so failed.¹⁴⁸ The bitter way in which these negotiations ended set the stage for a six-year commercial feud that engulfed the Montreal fur trade at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁹

As the non-opposition agreements came to an end in 1798-9, the firms that were not a part of the NWC joined together to form The New North West Company (XYC), which was also known as the 'XY' Company because of the unique markings that the Company placed on its cargoes. The Company is also sometimes referred to as Sir Alexander Mackenzie & Co., due to the fact that the Company was led by the renowned explorer. The XYC composed the Montreal firms of Forsyth, Richardson & Co., Leith, Jamieson & Co., John Mure & Co., and Parker, Gerrard, Ogilvy & Co., while the Phyn, Ellice & Inglis served as the Company's London House.¹⁵⁰ Considering that McTavish, Fraser had pushed out Phyn, Ellice & Inglis from the business of supplying the NWC in

¹⁴⁵ Fleming, 'McTavish, Frobisher', p. 140.

¹⁴⁶ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 199.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 92-3.

¹⁵⁰ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 204, 213; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 92-3.

1792, it is likely that the latter firm played a major role in the creation of a new, effective opposition. From 1798 to 1804, the rivalry between the NWC and XYC led to unheard of levels of intimidation, pilfering, and incitement of indigenous communities as the two rivals attempted to acquire ascendancy of the trade.¹⁵¹ The two companies frequently constructed their trading posts in close proximity, and while everyday relations between each side were largely ones of mutual assistance, as instanced in the sharing of provisions to ward off starvation, when it came to trading furs there was virtually no limit to their efforts to claim the furs of indebted Aboriginal peoples.¹⁵² On more than one occasion, this drive for furs resulted in bloodshed.¹⁵³ In August 1802, Joseph-Maurice Lamothe, a young clerk of the XYC, murdered James King of the NWC after the latter attempted to steal his furs.¹⁵⁴ The disturbances unsettled the colonial administration and led to the passage of the Canada Jurisdiction Act (1803) in the British Parliament, which allowed for nominated Justices of the Peace to arrest those suspected of wrongdoings in the 'Indian Country' to then be sent for trial in the courts of Lower Canada.¹⁵⁵ It was only with the death of Simon McTavish in 1804 that a reconciliation of the two companies was made possible. In that same year, the two companies merged under the banner of the NWC. Shares were allocated to each of the Company's Montreal firms and wintering partners, and the London business was split between McTavish, Fraser, the reorganised Inglis, Ellice & Co., and Mackenzie, Gillespie & Parker.¹⁵⁶ The revitalised NWC now possessed a monopoly of the Canadian fur trade, with the resources of all the Montreal firms still active in the trade, and the backing of their respective London Houses. This agreement lasted until the merger of the NWC and HBC in 1821. In effect, the fracture that occurred in the Canadian fur trade between 1798 and 1804 was a precursor to the later conflict between the HBC and NWC, a subject that is subsequently explored in chapter two.

¹⁵¹ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 221, 229-30.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30; and Douglas Leighton, 'Joseph-Maurice Lamothe', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

¹⁵⁵ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 230.

¹⁵⁶ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 92-3. Mackenzie, Gillespie & Parker is rarely mentioned in the extant literature but it is clear from Fleming's analysis of the NWC's partnership agreements, and two bankruptcy proceedings at the Court of Chancery that the firm was involved in the trade. See Fleming, 'McTavish, Frobisher', pp. 143-4; TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccius v Steinberg*, 1813; and TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccius v Inglis*, 1814.

A large proportion of the participants in the Canadian fur trade were Scottish. Many of these individuals had previously operated in the fur trade of the Thirteen Colonies. Indeed, Heather Devine has argued that the NWC was a partial legacy of William Johnson, an Irish emigrant who became one of the most influential men in the colony of New York.¹⁵⁷ Johnson served as the British Indian Superintendent of the Northern Department between 1755 and 1774 and, in addition to the prestigious responsibility of ensuring favourable British relations with the indigenous communities of the Mohawk Valley, Johnson was a powerful landed proprietor and consistently extended patronage to Scottish immigrants.¹⁵⁸ This included one of the most significant men in the development of the NWC, Simon McTavish, who worked as a clerk in Johnson's household.¹⁵⁹ Other Scottish expatriates who later became partners in the NWC included Normand MacLeod, James Phyn, Alexander Ellice, James McGill, and John Richardson.¹⁶⁰ After the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, these individuals relocated their business to Montreal and abandoned their involvement in the fur trade of New York, Albany, Schenectady, and Detroit.¹⁶¹ Thus the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence infused the Montreal fur trade with English-speaking fur-traders from New England and New York.

Scots were well-represented in Britain's colonial enterprises and their tendency to form bonds based upon regional and familial ties was a central factor in the formation of their business networks.¹⁶² Indeed, in 1763 the fur trade involved a diverse array of French, French-Canadian, English, Scottish, and colonial British traders, but by 1821 the enterprise was largely dominated by those with a Scottish connection and this extended to the London firms that were involved in the trade. In light of the small number of

¹⁵⁷ See Devine, 'Roots in the Mohawk Valley', pp. 217-42.

¹⁵⁸ See Shannon, 'Dressing for Success', pp. 344-84. Also see Gail Danvers MacLeitch, 'Sir William Johnson (1715-1774): English Emissary to the Iroquois', in Karen Racine and Beatriz G. Mamigorian, eds., *The Human Tradition in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), pp. 73-83.

¹⁵⁹ Devine, 'Roots in the Mohawk Valley', pp. 217-42.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-42.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-42.

¹⁶² Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 5. Also see B. R. Tomlinson, 'From Campsie to Kedgere: Scottish Enterprise, Asian Trade and the Company Raj', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2002), pp. 769-91; and B. R. Tomlinson, "'The Only Merchant in Calcutta': John Fergusson and the Growth of Private Trade in Bengal, 1775-1790", in Toyin Falola, and Emily Brownell, eds., *Africa, Empire and Globalization: Essays in Honour of A. G. Hopkins* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011), pp. 237-52. For an excellent discussion of why 'Scottishness' functioned as a basis for trust see K. Tawny Paul, 'Credit and Ethnicity in the Urban Atlantic World: Scottish Associational Culture in Colonial Philadelphia', *Early American Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2015) pp. 661-91.

merchant firms that operated within the fur trade and the initial support that William Johnson afforded to Scottish emigrants this development is perhaps not surprising. The role of associational culture — such as the Beaver Club in Montreal and the Canada Club in London — in reinforcing ties between Scots should also be acknowledged.¹⁶³ Indeed, Kathleen Burke has found that approximately half of the individuals admitted to the Canada Club in the first five years of its existence were Scots or had Scottish ancestry.¹⁶⁴ These associations provided opportunities for those who sought to maintain or further develop their commercial interests in Canada. The uniqueness of the Scottish case should not be over-emphasised however. During the early modern period it was common for merchants to use their kinship and friendship connections when building their commercial networks, which was one of the methods used to fortify trust between geographically distant agents.¹⁶⁵ The Scots involved in the Canadian fur trade did, of course, deal with people who were outside of their family and ethnic circles but these ties did evidently play a crucial role in the construction of their business networks.¹⁶⁶

As has been shown, as the Canadian fur trade advanced westward a ‘revolution of scale’ occurred in its organisation. While the concentration of the trade into the hands of a few merchants was a development that occurred in other eighteenth-century Atlantic trades, the extent of this transformation in the Canadian fur trade was unique. The increasing length of trade routes necessitated the need to find cost reductions, secure long-term credit, and limit competition. This process culminated in the NWC securing a

¹⁶³ The Beaver Club was an exclusive dining club that existed between 1785 and 1824, which only admitted men who had spent at least one winter in the North American interior. The club met in a prestigious Montreal tavern once every two weeks in the winter months. The proceedings began orderly enough with formal meals but soon degenerated into drunken gaiety with recollections about wild adventures in the fur trade. See Carolyn Podruchny, ‘Festivities, Fortitude and Fraternalism: Fur Trade Masculinity and the Beaver Club, 1785-1827’, in Susan Sleeper-Smith ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 593-620; and Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 70-1, 144-6.

¹⁶⁴ Burke argues that the Montreal Beaver Club was an antecedent to the London Canada Club (formed in 1806) and that there was a notable ‘fur trade tradition’ present at the latter in its formative years. Members of the Canada Club included Edward Ellice, John Forsyth, George Garden, Alexander Mackenzie, William and Simon McTavish, John Mure, John Ogilvy, William Parker, and Thomas Yeoward. See Kathleen Burke, ‘Canada in Britain: Returned Migrants and the Canada Club’, in Marjory Harper, ed., *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 184-96.

¹⁶⁵ On the role of kinship, friendship, ethnicity, and religion in the construction of merchants’ networks see Davis, *Devonshire Square*, p. 64; Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their Overseas Networks* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), especially pp. 146-53; Peter Mathias, ‘Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise’, in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 15-35; and Zahedieh, ‘Making Mercantilism Work’, particularly pp. 154-8.

¹⁶⁶ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, pp. 109-10.

monopoly of the Montreal fur trade in 1804, one that lasted for 17 years. The HBC was, of course, already a large-scale form of business organisation that operated within the trade, and it has been pointed out that the management accounting practices adopted by the HBC and NWC were remarkably similar.¹⁶⁷ In the second decade of the nineteenth century, John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company (AFC) followed many of the same management practices, although the physical environment ultimately curtailed his capacity to monopolise the trade, as there existed multiple routes through which the American fur trade could be conducted.¹⁶⁸ Even so, it is clear that the North American fur trade gravitated towards large-scale types of business organisation between 1783 and 1821. In essence, the Canadian fur merchants adopted a multi-partnership form of trade organisation in an attempt to solve the problems created by their expanding commodity frontier. While the HBC continued as a joint-stock company, it too adopted new forms of organisation in the early nineteenth century through the implementation of the so-called 'retrenchment system'. Devised by Andrew Wedderburn Colville in 1810, the system reorganised the Company's trading posts into districts that reported to either the Northern Department (based at York Factory) or Southern Department (Moose Factory) and changed the way the Company assessed profitability to a method that analysed the trade balance of each individual post as opposed to just those on Hudson's Bay.¹⁶⁹ The reorganisation also granted more autonomy to the Company's fur traders by allowing them greater flexibility in decision making and a larger share of the Company's profits. To this end, the developments that occurred in the organisation of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century British fur trade gives weight to the idea that merchants (and entrepreneurs) — in their attempts to expand and sustain their enterprises — experimented with different ownership forms and organisational structures well before the proliferation of the joint-stock company in the late nineteenth century.¹⁷⁰ The

¹⁶⁷ Spraakman and Margret, 'Management Accounting Practices', pp. 101-2, 103.

¹⁶⁸ See Alfred D. Chandler, *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), pp. 19-20; Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA, 1977); and David Lavender, 'Some American Characteristics of the American Fur Trade Company', in Minnesota Historical Society, *Aspects of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967), pp. 30-9.

¹⁶⁹ On the so-called 'retrenchment system' see Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 311-5; Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, pp. 92-101; and Spraakman and Margret, 'Management Accounting Practices', pp. 103-5.

¹⁷⁰ A view most recently argued by Michael Aldous in his study of the evolution of Anglo-Indian trading firms. See Michael Aldous, 'Avoiding 'Negligence and Profusion': The Ownership and Organisation of Anglo-Indian Trading Firms, 1813 to 1870', unpublished PhD Thesis (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015), particularly pp. 2, 295-6. On the rise of the joint-stock form of ownership

increasing complexity of the fur trade thus promoted the emergence of a few, large trading companies.

III. Enticing Aboriginal Peoples to Trade

Another aspect that made the fur trade a highly specialised enterprise was its dependence upon the non-coerced labour of Aboriginal peoples in the Americas. In contrast to the use of African slaves in the sugar, tobacco, and other plantation trades, the Atlantic fur trade of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries necessitated cooperation between Europeans and indigenous communities. This circumstance was partly because Aboriginal peoples in North America were more adept at trapping furs than European fur traders, and partly due to the fact that European powers were often not in a position to subjugate these indigenous groups, either on account of their need for allies or the impracticability of placing the remote environments in which these dispersed groups lived under direct imperial control. The fur trade thus became a diplomatic mechanism for European powers (and the United States) to extend sovereignty over these distant territories and the Aboriginal communities that subsisted within them, whereas for indigenous peoples, the fur trade served as an effective means through which to acquire foreign manufactures and other imported commodities.

While Richard White's concept of 'the middle ground' was originally focused on the Great Lakes region during the French colonial period, it is transferable to the cross-cultural interactions that took place in the Hudson's Bay and Canadian fur trades between 1783 and 1821.¹⁷¹ In White's words, the middle ground was 'the place in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villages'.¹⁷² Since neither side was able to achieve their ends through force, Europeans and Aboriginal peoples were inclined to follow negotiation over confrontation and so each attempted to understand the reasoning of the other and 'to assimilate enough of that reasoning to put it to their own purposes'.¹⁷³ For this reason, the method of exchange that was used at the

in the late nineteenth century see Alfred Chandler, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Also see Chandler, *Strategy and Structure*; and Chandler, *Visible Hand*.

¹⁷¹ See White, *The Middle Ground*. For a critical appraisal of the middle ground concept see Philip J. Deloria, 'What Is the Middle Ground, Anyway?', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2006), pp. 15-22; Susan Sleeper-Smith, 'The Middle Ground Revisited', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2006), pp. 3-8; and Richard White, 'Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2006), pp. 9-14.

¹⁷² White, *The Middle Ground*, p. xxvi.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

point of trade between Aboriginal peoples and the HBC and Montreal fur traders contained values and practices that were unique to the trade. Each side adapted their own customs in an effort to appeal to what they perceived were the customs of the other, and in so doing often misinterpreted and distorted those customs, yet these misunderstandings created new meanings and practices that became those of the middle ground.¹⁷⁴

The exchanges in the fur trade started with the giving of gifts.¹⁷⁵ The British traders gifted the Aboriginal group or ‘band’ with items like prunes, tobacco, and alcohol, and the leader of the band — which the trading companies generally referred to as a ‘trading captain’ — was gifted with a suit of clothes that could also include stockings, shoes, a sash, handkerchief, and hat.¹⁷⁶ In return, the trading captain gifted some furs, after which there was ceremonial drinking and tobacco smoking.¹⁷⁷ It was only after this that the actual trading began, which involved both parties drinking alcohol.¹⁷⁸ The European-styled garments and accessories that were gifted to the trading captain served to enhance the captain’s or chieftain’s authority over his own people.¹⁷⁹ Access to European trade goods became a major factor that Aboriginal peoples looked for when selecting their leaders. The clothing therefore symbolised the chieftain’s ability to provide his people with European goods and so served to reinforce their eminent position within their own community. Enhancing the status of the chiefs also assisted in the collection of trade debts.¹⁸⁰

The trade that took place at the HBC’s bay-side posts was more complex, as a trading ceremony was integrated into the customary gift-giving, drinking, and tobacco smoking. Figure 1.2 shows a modern rendition of this grand spectacle, which involved an intricate use of processions, pageantry, and salutes of canon fire.¹⁸¹ For instance, upon arrival at the Company’s post, it was customary for Aboriginal peoples to discharge their guns, which was in turn reciprocated by the Company through the firing of the fort’s

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. xxvi.

¹⁷⁵ Gift-giving held an essential place in pre-contact African, American, and European cultures and became a routine part of their intercultural transactions. See Robert S. DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 79-80.

¹⁷⁶ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 73, 94.

¹⁷⁹ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 137. On the NWC’s clothing of trading captains and use of ‘chief coats’ see Harry W. Duckworth, ed., *The English River Book: A North West Company Journal and Account Book of 1786* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990), pp. 14, 116, 125.

¹⁸⁰ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp. 137-8.

¹⁸¹ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 73.

Figure 1.2. Trading Ceremony at York Factory, 1780s.

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copyright restrictions.

Source: HBC Heritage, 'Trading Ceremony at York Factory, 1780s by Adam Sherriff Scott', 1948 < <http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/history/business/fur/tradingceremony> > [Accessed 02/09/2016].

cannons and the raising of the Company's flag.¹⁸² The ceremony represented the Company's efforts to turn its posts on Hudson's Bay into thriving entrepôts in an attempt to entice Aboriginal peoples to return the following year. In the late eighteenth century, as the HBC moved its focus to inland trade, the elaborate trading ceremonies at the Company's posts on Hudson's Bay gradually withered away in much the same way as the Great Rendezvous at Montreal. Transactions in the interior involved smaller quantities

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 73.

of goods than those conducted at the forts on Hudson's Bay, as the inland posts were situated much closer to Aboriginal communities and so could be more regularly visited. While inland posts were more convenient for many Aboriginal communities, this greater accessibility invariably meant that the exchanges at these interior locations could not emulate the grand spectacles that were a feature of the trade on Hudson's Bay. The use of these ceremonies does, however, question Rich's interpretation that the Company was essentially 'sleep[ing] by the frozen sea' until the development of its inland trade in the late eighteenth century.¹⁸³ Instead, for the Company's first 100 years, it was the central strategy of the Company to confine its efforts to the shores of Hudson's Bay, with the London Committee and their servants in North America being pro-active in their attempts to turn the Company's bay-side posts into prosperous trade centres.¹⁸⁴

Indeed, whether it was trade by Hudson's Bay or in the interior, the gathering of market information about the commodities that appealed to Aboriginal peoples was vital to success in the fur trade. Trading posts needed to be stocked with a wide range of well-assorted commodities that appealed to indigenous traders and trappers in order to induce them to part with their furs, and the quality dimension was especially important as Aboriginal communities meticulously examined the products on offer before agreeing to transactions.¹⁸⁵ During the eighteenth century, the HBC's London Committee continually attempted to expand the range of trade goods available at the Company's posts and endeavoured to ensure that the quality of these commodities met the satisfaction of the Cree, Chipewyan, and other Aboriginal peoples who journeyed to acquire them.¹⁸⁶ For instance, in the case of tobacco, this led the Company to offer two types: Virginian and Brazilian. The Brazilian variant was of a decidedly higher quality than the cheaper Virginian roll and was most demanded by the Company's Aboriginal customers.¹⁸⁷ In order to source Brazilian tobacco, the Company established contact with Lisbon merchants.¹⁸⁸ In an effort to improve the quality and reliability of the firearms that were offered for trade, which frequently suffered from operational issues as a result of the sub-arctic climate, the Company stationed armourers at the Company's posts. The armourers

¹⁸³ See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, especially p. 539. Also see Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁴ The traditional 'sleeping' interpretation is still at times evident in recent studies. See Burley, Hamilton, and Fladmark, *Prophecy of the Swan*, p. 24. For the more favourable, 'active' interpretation see Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁵ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 93-4.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, especially pp. 96-105.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8, 93-4.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

checked the supplied guns for defects, made any required repairs, serviced the guns of Aboriginal peoples, and, together with the Company's blacksmiths, made other metal products at Hudson's Bay itself so that the produced wares were suited to local conditions.¹⁸⁹ While the acquisition of market information was a vital part of any overseas trade, the challenging climatic conditions that the British fur trade operated within, as well as the diversity, customs, and migratory lifestyles of Aboriginal communities, added further complexities to the process. This market information was not easily accessible to merchants that lay outside of the trade, and it became even more difficult to access with the centralisation of the Montreal fur trade. The peculiar method of exchange and the barriers to procuring market information thus favoured the emergence of a few large trading concerns in the Atlantic fur trade.

The extension of credit to Aboriginal peoples also promoted commercial concentration. The use of credit was necessitated by the seasonality of the trade. Since the best furs were procured in the winter months, credit was advanced to Aboriginal peoples in the autumn so that they could purchase hunting tools and other commodities for the winter, although credit was also occasionally issued in the spring.¹⁹⁰ The problem for British and American fur traders was how to collect these debts, as they needed their indigenous debtors to return to them with furs and not to another trader.¹⁹¹ The most obvious solution, beyond encouraging loyalty, was to limit competition between traders so that Aboriginal communities had fewer opportunities to renege on their debts. Unfortunately, there are very few studies that look in-depth at the use of credit in the exchanges between British or American fur traders and Aboriginal peoples. The consensus seems to be that periods of intense competition between fur traders led to the more liberal use of credit.¹⁹² While there was always the risk that an indigenous trapper or trader would not return to pay their debts, their opportunities to do so were limited, especially after 1804 when only the HBC and NWC were active in the British Atlantic fur trade. Each company kept a record of the debts owed to them so it was relatively easy

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 98-9.

¹⁹⁰ Duckworth, *English River Book*, pp. 10-12, 14; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp. 137-8, 196-7; and Royce Kurtz, 'Looking at the Ledgers: Sauk and Mesquakie Trade Debts, 1820-1840', in Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1994), pp. 143-59.

¹⁹¹ On the collection of Aboriginal debts in the French colonial period see James C. King, 'Indian Credit as a Source of Friction in the Colonial Fur Trade', *Western Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1966), pp. 57-65.

¹⁹² Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp. 138, 195-6.

to establish whether an individual was repeatedly failing to repay their debts, and thus should be refused future credit. Larger amounts of credit were usually extended to trading captains or band leaders as they were considered to be more trustworthy.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the HBC and NWC were not always active in the same region, so there was not always an alternative source of trade goods.¹⁹⁴ Royce Kurtz has, however, questioned the extent to which Aboriginal peoples purchased commodities on credit, as his study of the 'Indian debt books' kept by American fur traders from 1820 to 1840 found that Sauk and Mesquakie hunters used a mix of credit and skins during their transactions with American traders.¹⁹⁵ Even so, it is clear that fewer participants in the trade assisted the collection of debts, and that the extension of credit to indigenous communities increased the specialisation of the fur trade.

How elastic was Aboriginal peoples' demand for imported commodities? Until the last few decades, it was generally thought that indigenous communities only participated in the fur trade to acquire a predetermined volume of trade goods from European traders.¹⁹⁶ In other words, the view was that Aboriginal groups stopped trapping furs once the number of trade goods in their possession reached a particular threshold. This meant that when European traders attempted to expand their trade by offering a greater volume of goods for trade, indigenous peoples responded by bringing fewer furs to trade as they did not need as many furs to attain the commodities they desired. Ann Carlos and Frank Lewis have, however, convincingly argued that the demand for trade goods amongst Aboriginal peoples was more flexible, as once these communities had acquired certain 'necessities' they sought to obtain 'luxuries'.¹⁹⁷ With a nod to Jan de Vries' 'industrious revolution', Carlos and Lewis maintain that there were 'industrious Indians' who, like many households in North West Europe and British North America between 1650 and 1850, were essentially willing to work more in order to buy more goods.¹⁹⁸ Indigenous communities thus increased the time they spent in the fur trade so that they could purchase additional imported goods, although in so doing they depleted the fur-bearing animal

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 137-8.

¹⁹⁴ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 176-7.

¹⁹⁵ Kurtz, 'Trade Debts', p. 151.

¹⁹⁶ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁷ See Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, especially pp. 130-49; and Ann M. Carlos and Frank D. Lewis, 'Trade Consumption, and the Native Economy: Lessons from York Factory, Hudson Bay', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2001), pp. 1037-64.

¹⁹⁸ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 130-49; and Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 10.

population upon which the trade depended.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, there were limits to Aboriginal peoples' demand for trade commodities as their migratory way of life limited the volume of goods that their 'household' could contain. As British fur traders established trading posts further inland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these limits were partially offset by the increased accessibility of these new posts, and so purchases could be made more regularly.

IV. Labour in the British Fur Trade

As the HBC and Canadian fur traders expanded their inland operations in the late eighteenth century, they developed a large workforce that was capable of transporting furs, trade goods, and provisions between the North American interior and the Atlantic coast. The men hired to undertake these feats of endurance required skills that were not commonly present in Britain or the settler societies in British North America. Canoe-men were needed to navigate the canoes that carried the trade's prized cargo swiftly across rivers that often contained treacherous rapids, as well as to carry the canoe and all its contents between bodies of water (known as a portage).²⁰⁰ Traders had to be well-versed in indigenous languages and in the keeping of financial records. All of these servants also had to adapt to life in isolated and often sub-arctic climates, and had to be willing to spend a considerable time away from their families. In addition to these specialities, inland trading required a detailed knowledge of the physical landscape and the movements of Aboriginal peoples so that trading posts could be optimally sited and the most efficient routes followed. Indeed, it was rare for interior trading posts to operate for more than three years. While the HBC and Canadian fur traders conducted their interior trade in much the same way, the places from which they sourced their servants differed.

As outlined above, the HBC was slow to develop its inland trade. This was partly because the Company's initial trading strategy was to entice Aboriginal peoples to Hudson's Bay, but it was also because the Company faced a number of barriers that made the development of its inland trade particularly challenging. For one, birch trees only grew in the southernmost part of Hudson's Bay so the Company did not have easy access to the key raw material needed to construct birch-bark canoes.²⁰¹ Furthermore, the

¹⁹⁹ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 106-29, 149-66.

²⁰⁰ On the tasks involved in the navigation of these canoes see Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 87, 127, 130-1, 124, 128.

²⁰¹ Wagner, 'Financial Innovator?', p. 181.

Company's initial attempts at inland trade were disastrous. The Company's first inland post, Henley House, was established on the Albany River in 1743, although its purpose was to persuade Aboriginal traders to venture down to Hudson's Bay rather than acting as a point of exchange itself.²⁰² Despite being well-defended with cannon, in 1755 the post was destroyed during the course of a conflict with the 'home-guard' Cree — who were so-called because they had largely abandoned their migratory way of life in favour of supplying the Company's posts with locally sourced provisions — and the clash resulted in the deaths of all the personnel stationed at the post.²⁰³ The post was rebuilt during the Seven Years' War but two weeks after its construction the post was attacked by Frenchmen disguised as Aboriginal peoples who shot one HBC servant dead and wounded another, with the two remaining servants forced to abandon the post and leave the wounded man with some indigenous women.²⁰⁴ More pertinently, the Company lacked servants with the requisite skills that inland trading required, and it was only in 1775 when the Company firmly committed to the policy of inland trade that it moved to address this issue.²⁰⁵

Since there was no ready supply of labour in Hudson's Bay that the Company could recruit from, for most of the eighteenth century the Company relied upon sojourners from the British Isles to conduct its overseas trade. Table 1.1 shows how the average annual number of the servants and officers employed by the Company in North America and their 'place of origin' changed between 1785 and 1819. The servants stated their place of origin when signing a contract with the Company, but this did not necessarily accurately reflect their birthplace. Indeed, it is possible that many of the servants who stated a London parish actually came from elsewhere in England. The average number of servants employed by the Company increased from 282 in 1785-92 to 485 in 1793-1800, and then to 506 in 1812-9.²⁰⁶ There was, therefore, a rapid expansion in the Company's workforce at the end of the eighteenth century as the Company sought to develop its inland trade, with a 70 per cent increase in a mere eight years. After 1800, the growth in the number of servants slowed.

²⁰² Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 66-7.

²⁰³ It is not clear why the 'home-guard' Cree chose to attack the post. See *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, pp. 610-3.

²⁰⁴ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, p. 614.

²⁰⁵ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 66-7.

²⁰⁶ See Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Average annual number of servants and officers employed by the HBC in North America by place of origin, 1785-1819.

	1785-1792	1793-1800	1812-1819
<i>England</i>			
Middlesex	30 (10.6%)	32 (6.6%)	22 (4.3%)
Other	29 (10.3%)	28 (5.8%)	14 (2.8%)
Total	59 (20.9%)	60 (12.4%)	36 (7.1%)
<i>Ireland</i>			
Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29 (5.7%)
<i>North America</i>			
Canada	4 (1.4%)	8 (1.7%)	14 (2.7%)
Hudson's Bay	3 (1.1%)	15 (3.1%)	78 (15.5%)
Total	7 (2.5%)	23 (4.7%)	92 (18.2%)
<i>Scotland</i>			
Orkney	209 (74.1%)	393 (81.0%)	280 (55.3%)
Other	7 (2.5%)	9 (1.9%)	60 (11.9%)
Total	216 (76.6%)	402 (82.9%)	340 (67.2%)
<i>Other</i>			
Total	<1*	<1*	9 (1.8%)**
Overall Total	282	485	506

Notes: When no parish or discernible locality was determinable from the lists of servants, corresponding information from alternative years was used, as well as, if available, the details contained within the servant's contract.

*Consists of Wales.

**Consists of Botany Bay, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Wales.

Source: HBCA, A.30/3-16, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1819*; and HBCA, A.32/1-19, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1818*.

By the late eighteenth century, the majority of the Company's servants came from the Orkney Isles on the north-east coast of Scotland. Indeed, by 1785-92, almost three-quarters of the Company's overseas servants originated from Orkney.²⁰⁷ The Company's association with Orkney began in the early eighteenth century, with the first Orkneymen entering the Company's overseas division in 1702.²⁰⁸ There were a number of reasons why Orkney became the predominant source of the Company's servants. First, the

²⁰⁷ See Table 1.1.

²⁰⁸ John Nicks, 'Orkneymen in the HBC, 1780-1821', in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 102-126; and Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 4.

London Committee became increasingly dissatisfied with the calibre of the servants that were recruited from London, who it believed encumbered the company's operations as they possessed a poor work ethic and consumed copious amounts of alcohol.²⁰⁹ Second, the search for alternative labour supplies led the Company to prioritise the recruitment of English 'country lads', who were supposedly free of the unscrupulous qualities that the committee detested in its metropolitan recruits, and Scots, who were especially well-regarded for their 'perceived qualities of subordination, sobriety, obedience and ability to endure deprivation'.²¹⁰ Orkneymen were thought to possess these qualities in abundance, were already used to sojourning in the whaling and fishing industries, and were willing to work for comparatively lower wages than their London counterparts.²¹¹ Finally, Orkney was conveniently located for trade to Hudson's Bay, offered a lower threat from privateers than the alternative voyage along the southern coast of England, and the port of Stromness provided cheap provisions alongside good harbours and servicing for the Company's vessels.²¹² Between 1785 and 1819, Orkneymen comprised the majority of the Company's labourers, canoe-men, artisans, and traders.²¹³

The makeup of the Company's workforce gradually diversified in the early nineteenth century as the London Committee became increasingly concerned that their reliance on Orkneymen made the Company vulnerable to collective bargaining for higher wages, a form of resistance that Orkneymen sometimes used when a large number of their contracts expired in the same year.²¹⁴ This created a tension between the need to maintain the size of the Company's workforce and the desire to not rely too heavily upon any one region. Selkirk's attempts to populate the Red River Settlement in the second decade of the nineteenth century brought Scottish Highlanders and Irishmen into the Company's employ, and the Company also began to recruit the male children of the Company's servants and Aboriginal women who were born in Hudson's Bay.²¹⁵ Chapter six discusses

²⁰⁹ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 3.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4. The northern fisheries were another significant form of overseas employment that was readily available to Orkneymen. Whaling vessels from Newcastle, Whitby, and Hull stopped at Stromness en-route to fishing grounds off the Greenland and Iceland coasts. See *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²¹³ On average each year between 1785 and 1819, Orkneymen made up 89 per cent of the Company's labourers, 84 per cent of the canoe-men, 79 per cent of the artisans, and 54 per cent of the inland traders. Derived from an analysis of the data contained in HBCA, A.30/3-16, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1819*; and HBCA, A.32/1-19, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1818*.

²¹⁴ Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (London: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), p. 31; and Burley, *Servants*, pp. 194-7.

²¹⁵ See Table 1.1.

these family units in more detail but suffice to say that, by 1800, the Company had begun to see the advantages of hiring their servants' so-called 'native sons' as this helped the Company to keep its existing workforce happy and, in time, to acquire a workforce well equipped with the skills required to survive in the challenging local environment. Very few Englishmen were employed by the Company at this time and they usually worked as clerks or officers.²¹⁶

Unlike the HBC, the British merchants who entered the Montreal fur trade after 1763 did not have to rely upon sojourning British servants or build from scratch a labour force with the necessary aptitudes for inland trade, as their French predecessors had already carried on a long tradition of trading in the interior. French-Canadian canoe-men, known as *voyageurs*, were a well-established feature of the trade, and they had developed unique oral and symbolic traditions. 'Mock baptisms' inaugurated newcomers into the fraternity of voyageurs, the last church in the parish of St. Anne became a site for ritual prayer and donation, and the singing of repetitive songs such as 'It is the Paddle That Brings Us', 'My Birch-Bark Canoe', and 'The Little Rock' served to coordinate canoe strokes, stave off fatigue, and commemorate the victims of fur trade tragedies.²¹⁷ The voyageurs were mainly habitant farmers from the province of Quebec who were seen as 'cheap and docile' by their fur-trade employers.²¹⁸ The men primarily joined the fur trade to supplement the small returns that their farms made so they could better support their families and thus recruitment fluctuated in accordance with the price of wheat.²¹⁹ The men were contracted for at least three years in a form of indentured servitude whereby they supplied their labour in return for food, shelter, and wages.²²⁰ The NWC, like the

²¹⁶ On average each year between 1785 and 1819, 48 per cent of the Company's clerks and half of the Company's officers originated from a parish in England. Derived from an analysis of the data contained in HBCA, A.30/3-16, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1819*; and HBCA, A.32/1-19, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1818*. Some of the Company's English servants were charity school boys from the Grey Coat Hospital at Westminster. The Company apprenticed these boys as surveyors, traders, and ship captains. See Richard I. Ruggles, 'Hospital Boys of the Bay', *The Beaver*, Vol. 308, No. 3 (1977), pp. 4-11. On London's Charity Schools see Dianne Payne, 'London's Charity School Children: The 'Scum of the Parish'?', *The Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2008), pp. 383-97.

²¹⁷ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 52-3, 58-65, 86-7, 89, 93, 114. Also see Carolyn Podruchny, 'Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821', *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (2002), pp. 1-18.

²¹⁸ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 28-9.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 28, 33, 47.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 35, 66.

HBC, also provided a pension fund for long-running servants of the Company, which is known to have operated between 1799 and 1811.²²¹

At the end of the eighteenth century, there was a rapid expansion in the size of the labour force employed in the Canadian fur trade.²²² The NWC increased the number of French-Canadians in its employ, whom were the overwhelming source of the Company's voyageurs, from around 500 in 1784 to up to 3,000 in the decade before 1821.²²³ This growth is perhaps not surprising in light of the Company's gradual domination of the Montreal fur trade, but it was also a result of the increasing length of the Company's trade routes. Indeed, the Company divided its voyageurs into three groups: the 'pork eaters' who were employed in the summer months and worked the canoes between Montreal and Lake Superior; 'north-men' who worked all year round and brought the canoes to the interior posts in the northwest; and 'Athabasca-men' who had to navigate the most challenging portages, cover the longest distances, and wintered north of Lake Athabasca and so were unable to make it to the summer rendezvous at Lake Superior.²²⁴ While the voyageurs made up the bulk of the labour involved in the Canadian fur trade, there were also clerks and traders who were known as 'bourgeois' or wintering partners. The bourgeois were the ones that kept the accounts of the venture, managed the distribution of provisions, and controlled the trades with Aboriginal peoples.²²⁵ Rather than French-Canadians, the wintering partners were usually of British origin.

The British fur trade thus required a highly specialised workforce. The Canadian fur traders were able to make use of a voyageur tradition amongst French-Canadians that was already well-established before they assumed control of the trade, whereas the HBC largely had to create an effective inland workforce from sojourning British servants. Orkneymen, and to a lesser extent the 'native sons' of Company servants, were the HBC's response to the revered French-Canadian voyageurs. The formation of this new workforce was not an easy one, however, especially considering that Britain was virtually continually at war from 1793 to 1815. The Company needed young men who were

²²¹ Ibid., pp. 42-3. On the HBC's pensions see Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 86-9, 172. Also see the biography of the HBC servant Thomas Bunn who received a pension of £50 per annum for seven years after his retirement to the Red River Colony in 1822. See Denis Bayley, *A Londoner in Rupert's Land: Thomas Bunn of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Chichester: Moore & Tillyer, 1969), p. 50. The EIC also developed a pension scheme for its London warehouse workers. See Makepeace, *Warehouse Labourers*, pp. 72-3, 84-5, 157-9, 161-6.

²²² Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 4-6.

²²³ Ibid., pp. 4-6.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 7, 65, 111, 146.

physically mature yet at an age where they would be amenable to the unfamiliar environment they were contracted to work in.²²⁶ As John Nicks has estimated, the Company's labourers — the entry role to becoming canoe-men — were usually only around 20 years of age at the time of their recruitment.²²⁷ These young men were in short supply as evidenced by the seemingly constant labour shortages at the Company's posts during the French Wars.²²⁸

V. Conclusion

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the British Atlantic fur trade gravitated towards monopolistic forms of trade organisation. This development was partly a result of the westward expansion of the fur trade within North America, which greatly increased the distances that the trade involved, and this was especially the case for Montreal fur traders, whose route into the interior was far longer than the one available to the HBC. In response to this challenge, the Canadian fur trade underwent a 'revolution of scale' in an effort to reduce costs and secure long-term credit. Eventually, this resulted in the vertical integration of wintering agents and Montreal merchants, and the horizontal integration of these Canadian firms into the NWC. As the Montreal trade became centralised under the NWC, the London Houses that supplied them were, in effect, vertically integrated with the Montreal firms. There were other factors that promoted the emergence of monopoly. The involvement of Aboriginal peoples, who were discerning consumers, favoured the reduction of competition between British merchants and limited the diffusion of market information to those who stood outside the trade. The need for a highly skilled workforce acted as a further barrier to entry into the trade and was a major problem for the HBC during this period, one the Company attempted to solve by recruiting large numbers of Orkneymen to train in the art of inland navigation. The fur trade became, therefore, a highly specialised enterprise that favoured large-scale forms of trade organisation.

²²⁶ Nicks, 'Orkneymen in the HBC', pp. 112-3.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²²⁸ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 61, 17, 25, 167.

The View from the Customs' House: Analysing Britain's fur imports

The Americas were the principal source of the furs imported into Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though the fur trade has been written about extensively, few substantial quantitative analyses have been undertaken. This is made all the more surprising by the abundance of trade statistics available in the British customs' records. These ledgers provide a comparative view of the regions that supplied furs to Britain and its wider re-export markets, a perspective that is missing from much of the historiography that largely treats the fur trades of Hudson's Bay, Montreal, and the United States in isolation.¹ Comparative studies have usually focused on the rivalry between the NWC and the HBC. This has had the unfortunate effect of marginalising the United States, another key region from which Britain imported furs, in the historical literature written from the British perspective.² Furthermore, the vast majority of studies in the post-1783 period overwhelmingly focus on the business of the fur trade within North America, and so the operation of the trade in Britain and Europe remains relatively obscure.³

¹ See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2; and Rich, *Montreal*.

² For instance, see Carlos, *Duopoly*. Britain also maintained interests in the deer trade of south-eastern North America through Pensacola, Florida. See Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815*, Second Edition (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1993), especially pp. 139-88; and Gregory A. Waselkov, 'The Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Indian Trade in Southeastern North America', in Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, William Wicken, eds., *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1998), especially p. 192.

³ Some studies have explored fur trade activities within Britain and Europe after 1783. Marjorie Campbell has shown that the NWC made multiple attempts to amalgamate with the HBC prior to the eventual merger between the two companies in 1821. See Campbell, *North West Company*, especially pp. 200-2, 250. Through a study of the financial records of the HBC, Ann Carlos has discerned that the company was close to bankruptcy in 1809-10 following the imposition of Napoleon's Continental Blockade, which she argues was a major factor in heightening competition in North America as the HBC responded to this crisis by stepping up its attempts to develop inland trade. See Carlos, *Duopoly*, especially pp. 100-6, 115-6, 165-7, 212.

A quantitative analysis of British fur imports therefore sheds light on a number of neglected aspects. For one, the statistics reveal the origin, composition, and scale of the furs traded between the different regions of North America and Britain. As a source of evidence that was compiled annually and which identifies a geographic provenance, import data is a very useful indicator that can be used to determine how the trade responded to the circumstances of war, commercial competition, and the depletion of the fur-bearing animal population. Indeed, Britain's Atlantic and European trades suffered from substantial market dislocations as a result of the protracted French Wars and the War of 1812. The customs' records are also a useful tool for analysing the effectiveness of the inland trading strategy embarked upon by the HBC from the late eighteenth century onwards, and offers new insights into the performance of the Montreal fur trade during a period when this branch of the trade was seriously challenged by its resurgent rival to the north, and was increasingly pressured by the new American republic to the south, which sought to assert its territorial jurisdiction. The trade ledgers also shed light on the under-researched trade in furs that operated between the United States and Britain. In addition, when the import data is compared alongside re-export figures, they enable the calculation of retained fur imports, a measure that can be used to infer the scope of demand for fur-bearing products in the British home market (chapter four). Comparing the trade of these diverse regions in a quantitative way thus affords a greater understanding of the trade's structure and the interconnections between communities in the North-Atlantic World.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first section discusses the practicalities involved in the study of the British customs' records and introduces the methodology that was used to analyse the import data. Of particular significance is the way in which the ledgers record trade in 'official values' and how furs were categorised in the records. Sections two, three, and four establish the origin of Britain's fur imports and the volume of the trade, ascertaining the shifts in relative importance of the key fur-trading regions, uncovering the commodity composition of the British fur trade, as well as determining the changing significance of the many types of furs that were imported into Britain. While the trade has often been described by historians as predominantly a trade in beaver furs, the customs' records reveal the importance of other varieties, especially marten and deer. In light of the relative size of the Montreal and Hudson's Bay fur trades, the fourth and final section considers why the 'chartered' HBC triumphed over the 'private' NWC traders at a time when British merchants and manufacturers increasingly thought that the

granting of exclusive commercial privileges to particular institutions restricted the growth in the nation's overseas trade.

I. *The British Customs' Records*

Despite the insights offered by the British customs' records, few studies have employed these statistics in their analyses of the fur trade. In the late nineteenth century, Henry Poland gathered quantities of what are presumably British fur imports for the period 1752-1891.⁴ There are, however, a number of major limitations with Poland's dataset. First, no references are provided and so, while it seems probable that the figures were taken from the British customs' records, this is not certain. Second, while the imports of the HBC are specified, imports from British North America and the United States were combined into a single category and so it is not possible to draw inferences on the relative importance of these two regions.⁵ Finally, the credibility of Poland's data has been called into question. James Clayton claims that, prior to 1822, Poland's statistics, especially those for the combined category of the United States and Canada, are estimates rather than tabulations.⁶ Unfortunately, however, Clayton has not yet published, in quantitative form, his own estimates of the volume of the United States fur trade from data contained in the annual reports of the secretary of the United States treasury. Murray Lawson has collated an extensive array of British fur import, export, and re-export data from all parts of the world for the period 1700 to 1775.⁷ Lawson has produced tables that list furs by type and country of origin but this data does not include deer and seal skins and the exclusion of the former greatly underestimates the scale of the pre-1783 trade.

In 1696, the British government instructed the Inspector-General of Customs to compile a regular and inclusive series of statistics concerning the nation's overseas trade, a practice that continued until the end of the nineteenth century. These ledgers listed the volumes and values of commodities that England and Wales — and later Scotland and Ireland — imported, exported, or re-exported each year.⁸ The quantities recorded were

⁴ See Henry Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals in Nature and in Commerce* (London: Gurney & Jackson, 1892), pp. xxi-xxxiii.

⁵ Poland also established the volume of 'European furs' imported for the period 1820-41 but the source is not identified.

⁶ See Clayton, 'American Fur Trade', pp. 160-80.

⁷ See Lawson, *Fur*, pp. 87-135.

⁸ Despite the Union of Ireland Act 1800, from 1783 to 1821, the customs' records treated Ireland as a foreign country. This continued until 1825. See Ralph Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), p. 81.

taken from day-to-day declarations that were made by merchants at the British port on the quantities of commodities they imported or exported, and these depositions were used by state officials to calculate the charges that were due.⁹ A declaration of the market or ‘real value’ of the commodities was unnecessary for this purpose. Though most duties were nominally *ad valorem*, the rates that were charged during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries largely pertained to a list of commodity valuations that had been made in the immediate years after 1700.¹⁰ Due to the complexities involved in working out real values, contemporaries rarely improved these ‘official’ valuations. As Ralph Davis points out, even though the valuations contained in the customs’ records had little resemblance to market values, the fact that commodity prices were largely constant for most of the eighteenth century means that the official trade figures provide an acceptable representation of reality until its closing years.¹¹ The official values only significantly diverged from real values during the 1790s and beyond, as the inflationary pressures of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars instigated a sharp general rise in prices.¹² At the end of the century, indeed, concern arose in mercantile and official circles that the trade statistics falsely depicted British overseas trade. From 1798 onwards, a calculation of the real value of exports, based on merchant declarations and data from published price currents, was placed alongside the official value.¹³ However, and most importantly for this chapter, little attempt was made to update the official valuations of imports or re-exports until 1854, and, in consequence, British imports and re-exports were only recorded in the form of ‘official values’.¹⁴

The analysis presented here primarily uses the ‘official values’ contained in the British customs’ records as the most convenient measure from which to assess the relative importance of each branch of the trade. Customs’ officials recorded the quantities of furs that merchants imported or exported as per the number of pelts. Since the skins of many different animals were traded, it becomes problematic to use the stated quantities when referring to the whole trade. For example, over 6.3 million coney (rabbit) skins and around

⁹ Ibid., pp. 77-8.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 11, 77-8. *Ad valorem* is Latin for ‘according to value’. Of course new valuations had to be made for commodities that had never appeared in the records before. See Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 78.

¹² Ibid., p. 78.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 11, 78-9.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

5.9 million beaver furs were imported into Britain between 1783 and 1821.¹⁵ There are, of course, distinct differences in the size of the two mammals, but beaver fur was also worth substantially more than rabbit fur, and so any consideration of the trade's significance needs to take some account of the value of each fur type. Rather than calculate the real value of the imported furs — a difficult task given the problem of finding consistent yearly price data and the fact that the quality of furs, and hence their price, varied considerably — it makes more sense to use the recorded official values.¹⁶ While official values do not reflect actual market value, they can be used to show the relative significance of the trade in each type of fur and the importance of each region.

In order to manage the copious amounts of data contained in the customs' records, the thesis largely uses the annual trade data to construct four- and five-year averages. The use of such averages eliminates the impact of short-term trade fluctuations and so provides a long-term view that allows broad trends in the trade to be established. This is not to say that a year-by-year picture of the trade is not useful; rather, what is lacking from the current literature is an overall evaluation of the how the trade fared in the post-1783 period. It is unlikely that this long-term view would have been available to contemporaries, as it seems improbable that the Montreal traders kept such copious accounts and that the Inspector-General of the British Customs kept such a close eye on the performance of the British fur trade, especially considering that the trade comprised so small a proportion of the nation's overseas trade. Indeed, using Davis's estimates of the real value of 'hides and skins' imported into Britain from the Americas, the fur trade only accounted for 2 per cent of all British imports from all parts of the world in the period 1784-1816.¹⁷ Only the HBC Committee, overseeing the trade from afar with its detailed accountancy procedures, monitored the performance of its own trade in such a

¹⁵ TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21.

¹⁶ Indeed, in the words of R. C. Nash, 'no attempt has so far been made to revalue imports, since it has proved impossible to devise a price index for the purpose which adequately reflects the commodity composition of the import trades'. Such a task is further confounded by the fact that the customs' records, as they do for all commodities, take no account of the qualities of the recorded furs. See Davis, *British Overseas Trade*, p. 84; and R. C. Nash, 'The Balance of Payments and Foreign Capital Flows in Eighteenth-Century England: A Comment', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1997), p. 111.

¹⁷ Davis's figures are estimates of real values that were calculated for three consecutive years in each decade (1784-6, 1794-6, 1804-6, 1814-6). The stated percentage was worked out by calculating the average annual real value of 'hides and skins' that were imported into Britain from Canada (including Hudson's Bay), the United States, the West Indies, and Latin America (£315,500) in 1784-1816 by the average annual value of imports from all parts of the world (£15,669,333). See Davis, *British Overseas Trade*, pp. 110-7.

Table 2.1. Average annual official value of ‘skins’ imported into Britain, 1783-1821 (in £).

	Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	Total
<i>Skins</i>					
Furs ^a	1,465 (1%)	117,632 (92%)	310 (0%)	7,067 (6%)	126,473
Livestock ^b	70 (0%)	877 (1%)	488 (0%)	97,083 (99%)	98,518
Other	102 (2%)	3,924 (58%)	184 (3%)	2,558 (38%)	6,767
Total	1,637 (1%)	122,432 (53%)	982 (0%)	106,708 (46%)	231,759

Notes: The ‘southern fisheries’ were included in the figures for the Americas. The table does not include any data for the year 1813 as the customs’ records were destroyed in fire at the Customs’ House in February 1814.

^a comprises bear, beaver, calabar, cat, coney, deer, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, hare, marten, mink, musquash, otter, raccoon, sable, seal, squirrel, and wolf;

^b includes raw and tanned calf, goat, kid, and lamb skins.

Source: The National Archives (TNA), CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21.

comparable way. The calculation of the averages used in this study follow a relatively straightforward methodology, one designed to reflect many of the major events of the period. Five-year averages were calculated for the period 1783-1812, followed by four-year averages for the period 1814-21, owing to the fact that the fire at the Customs’ House in February 1814 destroyed the official trade records for the preceding year. 1783-7 and 1788-92 cover a period of trade reconstruction following the dislocations caused by the American War of Independence. The next set of averages, 1793-7 and 1798-1802, reflect the trade following the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars and the latter average also includes the years of the major trading rivalry between the NWC and the XYC. 1803-7 and 1808-12 cover most of the Napoleonic War period, while 1814-7 and 1818-21 show how the trade proceeded after the French Wars and the War of 1812, as well as, the escalation in the HBC-NWC rivalry.

In the ledgers, the various types of furs are listed under the broad heading of ‘skins’. This umbrella term therefore includes both raw and tanned livestock hides, such as calf, goat, kid, and lamb, in addition to, bear, beaver, calabar, cat, coney, ‘deer’, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, hare, marten, mink, ‘musquash’, otter, raccoon, sable, ‘seal’, squirrel, and wolf furs.¹⁸ Table 2.1 shows that 99 per cent of the livestock hides imported into Britain

¹⁸ In the historical literature of the fur trade, the terms ‘deerskin’ and ‘sealskin’ are frequently used to refer to both raw and worked skins. The British customs’ records did not refer to them in this way, opting to use the name of the animal. In this study, ‘deer’ and ‘seal’ are used to refer to undressed skins, and

originated from Europe and that 92 per cent of the imported furs came from the Americas. On average, skins to the official value of £107,000 (46 per cent of the overall total) were imported into Britain from Europe each year, and £122,000 of skins (53 per cent of the overall total) were imported from the Americas to Britain to each year.¹⁹ The two trades were thus of a similar size but it is clear that the supply of livestock hides to Britain was principally a European trade, while the supply of furs to Britain was predominantly an Atlantic trade. Russia and the Baltic had evidently ceased to be a major supplier of furs to Britain, and in light of this clear distinction between the two markets, the rest of the chapter focuses on examining the trade with the Americas.

First, however, it is useful to consider the use to which each of these furs was put. While they were used in many different ways, the furs can be divided into three broad groups: luxury fur, 'staple' fur, and leather. Luxury or fancy fur was valued for its beauty, lustre, and warmth. This characteristic comes from the long, coarse guard hairs on the pelt and was used in garment manufacture, such as for boas, muffs, trimmings, and coat-linings.²⁰ The majority of furs were used for this purpose and included bear, beaver, fox, marten, musquash, mink, otter, raccoon, seal, and wolf. On the other hand, staple fur refers to those that were used in the hatting industry through the manufacture of felt, a process that used the layer of short, sharp, curly, barbed hairs that lie close to the skin's surface.²¹ The removal of these hairs from the pelt forms a so-called fur-wool that is highly suited to the manufacture of felt. Beaver, coney (rabbit), and musquash were particularly well-suited to this purpose. In the case of the imported deer and seal, another key use was the manufacture of leather. Of course, livestock hides were also tanned but it seems that the imported deer were primarily used to make deerskin breeches, although along with sealskin, deerskin was also used to make footwear, gloves, and book - bindings.²²

deerskin and sealskin are used when referring to those that have been tanned. While they are now better known as muskrats, the thesis uses the contemporary 'musquash'. Although marten was spelt 'martin' at this time, it is the modern usage that has been followed.

¹⁹ See Table 2.1.

²⁰ Lawson, *Fur*, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²² Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, pp. 87-8; and Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. 348-9. Also see chapter six for a discussion of the uses of sealskin.

II. The Twilight of the Montreal Fur Trade

Britain's Atlantic trade flourished in the eighteenth century and the fur trade, while statistically small, was one of its most distinct components. The fur trade characterised economic activity across huge swathes of the American continent, was a site of cross-cultural exchange, and in some areas was used to formulate military alliances between European powers and Aboriginal peoples. It is therefore somewhat surprising that despite the extensive literature which adopts an 'Atlantic World' approach, few studies have utilised British trade statistics to compare the relative scale of the different branches of the fur trade, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Figure 2.1 shows the average official value of furs imported into Britain from the Americas between 1699 and 1821, with the pre-1783 data taken from Davis's tabulations of official values. The data show that the British fur trade peaked in 1788-92, in the period of trade reconstruction following the independence of the United States. By 1818-21, the trade had endured a substantial decline, as is evident in the official value of British imports from the Americas falling from an annual average of £150,000 in 1788-92 to £102,000 in 1818-21, a decrease of almost one-third.²³ In the years prior to 1803, the fur trade appears to have been relatively stable at around £145,000 per year. In 1803-7, however, the value of the trade declined by over a quarter to £108,000.²⁴ This was followed by a further decline of 28 per cent in 1808-12 (£77,845), and another 11 per cent fall in 1814-17 (£69,153). Only in 1818-21 did a notable upturn occur with a 47 per cent increase, which resulted in imports reaching a similar level to those in 1803-7.²⁵

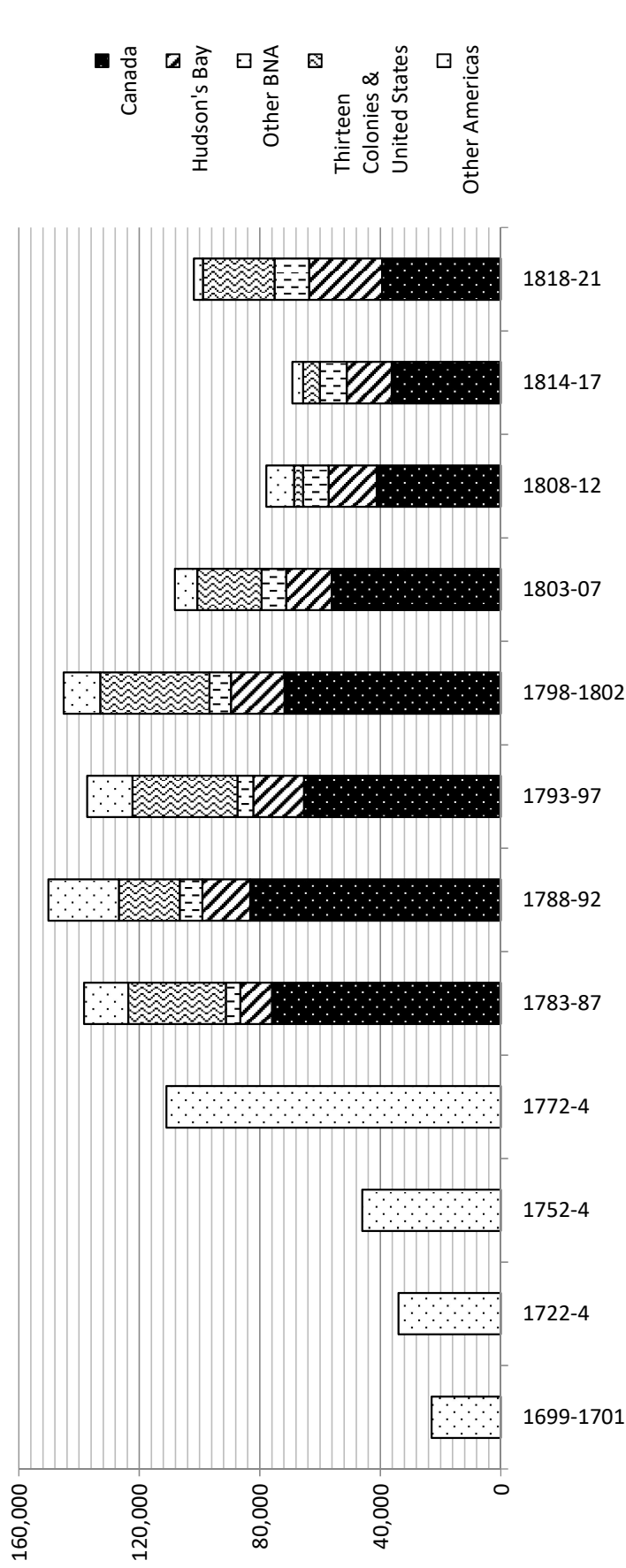
The reasons why there was an overall decline over the period and such a pronounced depression between 1803 and 1817 is best explained by analysing Britain's fur imports from the Americas by their place of origin. Focusing on the fortunes of the Canadian fur trade shows a near-terminal decline in this branch of the trade. Only in 1798-1802, at the time of the stand-off between the NWC and the XYC, and in 1818-21, when the disputes between the NWC and the Earl of Selkirk had largely moved to the courts of Lower and Upper Canada, did the Montreal route show any sign of recovery. Evidently, the jewel of the British fur trade experienced major problems at this time. The official value of the colony's fur exports to Britain were £39,405 in 1818-21, less than half of what they had

²³ See Figure 2.1.

²⁴ For 1803-7, the average annual official value of furs imported from the Americas was £108,000, as compared to £145,000 for 1798-1802.

²⁵ The average for 1818-21 was £101,913.

Figure 2.1. Average annual official value of furs imported into Britain from the Americas by place of origin, 1699-1821 (in £).



Notes: The pre-1783 averages were taken from Davis's compilation of the official value of English imports of 'skins and hides' from the Americas as recorded in the customs' records. For convenience, these figures have been categorised as 'Other Americas'. The post-1783 averages were calculated using data taken directly from the British customs' records and include Scottish imports. Apart from the year 1813, the records for which were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814, all years between 1783 and 1821 were used to work out the averages. 'Canada' refers to the province of Quebec in British North America (BNA) which includes the fur-trading centre of Montreal. 'Other BNA' includes the additional British colonies in North America. 'Other Americas' consists of imports from the British and Foreign West Indies, Florida (a Spanish colony until 1819), Central and South America, and the 'southern fisheries'. The official value of coney skins was re-calculated as 1d. per skin (as was the case in 1790-1821) for the years 1783-9 so that the official valuation of this fur type remained consistent.

Source: Ralph Davis, 'English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1962), pp. 300-1; TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21.

been in 1788-92 (£83,174) and examinations of the official values and the quantity of furs presented in the customs' records confirms that the method of valuation remained constant and so does not account for this notable shift.²⁶ The Montreal fur traders clearly found it very difficult to maintain the volume of their trade during this period.

There are four key reasons to explain why the Canadian fur trade declined to such a degree. The most important factor appears to have been problems in the availability of furs. At a Select Parliamentary Committee in 1812, which had been established to investigate concerns surrounding the Orders in Council, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the former leader of the XYC and now a partner in the NWC, was questioned on the Canada trade and was asked to provide his opinion on its future prospects. The Committee asked Mackenzie whether there was any probability of an extension to the fur trade, to which he replied:

I do not suppose it can be extended; it may be extended in respect of the territory, but in quantity it is almost impossible, for the country is very much exhausted, and those who follow it have got as far as the Pacific Ocean; no exertion they can make can continue the quantity that is now got from that country, and regularly imported to this country.²⁷

Depletion of the fur-bearing animal population was evidently a major factor in the decline in the volume of the Canadian fur trade. This was particularly the case for beaver, which had been driven to near-extinction in much of eastern North America by the early nineteenth century.²⁸

Another cause was the tightening trade regulations of the United States, legislation that acted to hinder the activity of British subjects in territory that lay to the south of the Great Lakes. The imposition of Jay's Treaty in 1794 compelled the British to abandon garrisons at Detroit, Grand Portage, and Michilimackinac, sites that now lay within the boundaries of the new American republic, which the British government had actually acknowledged a decade earlier in the Treaty of Paris (1783).²⁹ Jay's Treaty supposedly guaranteed British subjects free and unhindered access to the Great Lakes and beyond. The treaty stated that the traders of both parties and all their property would be protected

²⁶ The only re-evaluation that took place for 'fur' imports between 1783 and 1821 was for coney skins, the official value for which changed from approximately 6½d. to 1d. in 1790.

²⁷ *Minutes of evidence, taken before the Committee of the Whole House, to whom it was referred, to consider of the several petitions which have been presented to the House, in this session of Parliament, relating to the orders in council* (P.P. 1812, Vol. 111.1), p. 603.

²⁸ Richards, *The World Hunt*, p. 52.

²⁹ Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 56-9; Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 177; and Campbell, *The North West Company*, pp. 30-2.

and that they would continue to enjoy an unmolested trade.³⁰ American citizens, British subjects, and Aboriginal peoples were to be able to pass freely across the boundaries between British North America and the United States, excepting the territories of the HBC.³¹ In addition, there were to be no duties of entry levied by either party on pelts traded inland so long as such articles were purely in transit.³²

The United States, however, gradually imposed obstructions on British traders' access to the Great Lakes and the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers after 1794. Heavy taxes, disagreements with American officials, and delays in transport, on top of existing problems with the availability of pelts and increasingly protracted trade routes, deterred Montreal traders involved in the south-west trade from continuing their operations.³³ This not only caused several south-west traders to move into the north-west trade but also resulted in some entirely withdrawing from the fur trade. The advance of American settlers westward also impeded the south-west trade.³⁴ The creation of the Michilimackinac Company in 1803, an organisation that operated in American territory but was based in Montreal, was designed to protect the interests of several Canadian merchants in the south-west fur trade following the Louisiana Purchase.³⁵ By the early nineteenth century American opposition towards Canadian traders on US territory had increased to the extent that there were reports of Canadian boats being seized at Detroit and Niagara.³⁶ On 21 May 1808 American authorities at Niagara actually fired on a NWC canoe brigade that was engaged in the south-west trade.³⁷ The outbreak of the War of 1812 caused yet more difficulties. As was often the case with merchants during wartime, the NWC traders were called on to arrange the transportation of provisions and supplies to assist British military efforts. William McGillivray, then the leader of the NWC, played a crucial role in orchestrating the supply of provisions and in securing the support of Aboriginal communities to fight under the British flag.³⁸ McGillivray even raised a Corps of Voyageurs to assist in the conflict. The Voyageur Corps fought alongside other NWC members and Aboriginal peoples led by the chief Tecumseh, an armed force that went on

³⁰ *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, between His Britannick Majesty and the United States of America* (P.P. 1794, Vol. 1), p. 4.

³¹ *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation* (P.P. 1794, Vol. 1), p. 5.

³² *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation* (P.P. 1794, Vol. 1), p. 6.

³³ Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 108.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³⁷ Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1962), p. 161.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 188, 191.

to capture Fort Michilimackinac from the Americans.³⁹ The NWC also contributed to the British war effort by loaning the use of many of its ships to the British military. The NWC lent at least five of its vessels stationed on the Great Lakes to this end. The *Caledonia* and *Detroit*, two of the Company's brigs, in addition to three schooners, the *Nancy*, *Mink*, and *Perseverance*, were all loaned to the British government. The first four were destroyed in the conflict so that by the war's end the *Perseverance* and the *Invincible* were the only two vessels the NWC had left to shuttle goods efficiently across the Great Lakes.⁴⁰ McGillivray later commented in 1818 that the war had severely disrupted the NWC's operations, as the defeat of the British fleet on Lake Erie had left the Americans in complete possession of the Great Lakes and had cut off the forwarding of supplies between the interior and Upper and Lower Canada for the whole of 1814.⁴¹

The debilitating impact of war with the United States was compounded by the activities of John Jacob Astor, a figure who played an instrumental part in the closing of the south-west trade to Canadian traders. Astor had long been involved in business dealings with Montreal merchants and the NWC, and these connections intensified following the imposition of Jay's Treaty when he had leased a warehouse belonging to McTavish, Frobisher on Vaudreuil Street, Montreal.⁴² In 1808, Astor established the AFC, which received a Charter from the state of New York and was capitalised at 1 million dollars.⁴³ Together with the Pacific Fur Company, Astor sought to expand American trade across the entire North American continent to reach the shores of the Pacific Ocean.⁴⁴ Astor had previously mainly acted as an intermediary but he now started purchasing furs on his own account and made another play for the North American fur trade by avowing to absorb the Michilimackinac Company.⁴⁵ The South West Company, the successor to the Michilimackinac Company, was formed in 1811 to resolve differences between Astor and Montreal merchants involved in both the north- and south-west trade. The NWC held a one-third interest in the new concern and agreed to transfer the posts that it had in the territory of the United States to the new South West Company.⁴⁶ Certain goods could be obtained under better terms in either New York or Montreal and

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 191-2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 195, 200.

⁴¹ *Papers relating to the Red River Settlement* (P.P. 1819, Vol.XVIII.1), p. 125.

⁴² Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 57; and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 91.

⁴³ Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 163; and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 161.

⁴⁴ Campbell, *North West Company*, pp. 166-7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 166-7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 167-9.

so Astor and William McGillivray agreed to split the lucrative supply business in half, which also enabled them to pay the least amount of duties. Another agreement to continue the SWC for another five years was signed in 1815 but events on the Pacific coast had led Astor to step up his efforts to end Canadian involvement in the south-west trade.⁴⁷ During the War of 1812, the NWC purchased Fort Astoria, the flagship post of the Pacific Fur Company at the mouth of the Columbia River, from the officers stationed at the post.⁴⁸ In retribution for this slight, Astor successfully lobbied the US Congress to pass legislation that limited licenses for fur trading on American soil to American citizens, which came into effect in 1817.⁴⁹ The NWC was thus barred from the south-west trade and William McGillivray was compelled to sell the Company's shares in the South West Company at a considerable loss.⁵⁰ The door to the southern Great Lakes and Mississippi was thereafter closed to Canadian ventures.

Alongside the development of the American fur trade, the withdrawal of Canadian fur merchants from the south-west trade, and the depletion of the fur-bearing animal population, the Canadian fur trade also had to contend with the resurgence of the HBC. As was highlighted in chapter one, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the HBC ploughed substantial fiscal resources into expanding its workforce, in incentivising its servants to work inland, and in encouraging its workers to re-contract to keep experienced men within the Company in order to train new recruits.⁵¹ The building of craft for inland navigation was another key objective. The NWC's voyageurs may have initially scoffed at their northern rival's attempts at canoe-building, for the HBC's 'York boats', as they were called, were supposedly 'great clumsy craft that brought howls of laughter from the skilled Canadian voyageurs' but there was no doubting that the HBC's shift to inland trade would challenge Montreal's hegemony of the North American fur trade.⁵² By the early nineteenth century, the NWC would certainly have begun to feel the effects of the HBC's inland ventures but it is debatable how successful the HBC was in wresting market share away from the Montreal traders, a question that will be addressed below.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 223.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 188-92.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 223-4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 234.

⁵¹ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 21-2, 25, 34-5.

⁵² Campbell, *North West Company*, pp. 60-1.

Table 2.2. Official value of furs imported from Canada and Hudson's Bay as a percentage of their combined total, 1783-1821 (in %).

	Canada	Hudson's Bay	Percentage Change
1783-87	88%	12%	-
1788-92	84%	16%	+4%
1793-97	80%	20%	+4%
1798-1802	80%	20%	0%
1803-07	79%	21%	+1%
1808-12	72%	28%	+7%
1814-17	71%	29%	-1%
1818-21	62%	38%	+9%

Notes: 'Canada' refers to the province of Quebec in British North America (BNA) which includes the fur-trading centre of Montreal. The positivity or negativity of the percentage change is in relation to the figures for Hudson's Bay.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21.

The extent to which the HBC commercially out-competed the NWC is debatable, but it is clear that the HBC's support for Selkirk's colonisation scheme at Red River had a profound impact on the fortunes of the Montreal fur trade. This is perhaps best shown by comparing the official values of British fur imports from Hudson's Bay and Canada. In 1783-7, Canada accounted for £75,949 and Hudson's Bay made up £10,548 of fur imports.⁵³ The ratio between the two trades was thus roughly 8:1. By 1818-21 the gap had narrowed in the HBC's favour so that the ratio was 3:2. In fact, the ratio between the two trades was at its narrowest in 1818-21. Table 2.2 shows British fur imports from Canada and Hudson's Bay as a percentage of their combined total and states the percentage change for each average as compared to the previous one. The data show that fur imports from Hudson's Bay were gradually gaining ground on those from Canada but this shift was far from uniform. Prior to 1807, the change was slight and in 1798-1802 there was none at all. It was in 1808-12 and 1818-21 that the most substantial alterations to the market share of the two trades occurred. In 1808-12, fur imports from Hudson's Bay were 7 per cent higher than they were in 1803-7.⁵⁴ This was not because of any

⁵³ See Figure 2.1.

⁵⁴ See Table 2.2.

notable change in the trade of the HBC but rather the result of the disturbances to Montreal's south-west trade. Indeed, the official value of Britain's fur imports from Hudson's Bay annually averaged £15,121 in 1803-7, which was very similar to the £15,967 in 1808-12. This was not the case in 1818-21. The final years of this study bore witness to the most significant reduction in the gap between fur imports from Hudson's Bay and Canada. Imports from Hudson's Bay increased to such an extent that the difference between the two was reduced by 9 per cent.⁵⁵

While this surge in the trade of the HBC did not lead to a fall in fur imports from Canada, it is clear that this denied the Montreal fur traders the opportunity to recover their trade to the levels they had been prior to the onset of major troubles with the United States. Instrumental in this was the Earl of Selkirk's Red River Settlement. Like Selkirk's three previous attempts at colonisation, the scheme at Red River was fraught with difficulties. The first ship carrying settlers was led by Miles Macdonnell, the HBC's appointed Governor of the new colony, and set sail from Stornoway in July 1812 but stormy seas delayed their arrival at York Factory. This was particularly problematic as York Factory, although it was the HBC's main post in North America, was ill-equipped to cater for the 105 migrants who had journeyed across the Atlantic.⁵⁶ The colonists were forced to overwinter at the post in poor accommodation and with meagre provisions before they could venture inland to the outlined territory in the spring of 1813. During the journey inland, so many settlers died from scurvy and starvation or deserted the expedition that the colonists numbered only 22 by the time they reached Red River.⁵⁷ The colonists' fortunes did not improve. Inadequate planning and knowledge of the local environment, a recurring feature of Selkirk's schemes, hampered the development of the colony. Of most concern was the lack of food. The frozen soil complicated attempts at agriculture and even the hardiest varieties of crops were spoiled by harsh frosts.⁵⁸ The colonists were largely dependent on the goodwill of the HBC and the NWC for their provisions but this amicable relationship did not last.⁵⁹ Increasingly desperate for food as successive waves of colonists added to the number of mouths to feed, and convinced that he had the power to dictate policy for all the peoples within the confines of the vast Red River territory, Governor MacDonnell issued a proclamation in 1814 that prohibited the export of

⁵⁵ See Table 2.2.

⁵⁶ Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 204.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204; and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 212.

⁵⁸ Campbell, *North West Company*, pp. 205-8.

⁵⁹ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 212.

pemmican from Red River.⁶⁰ Derived from dried buffalo meat, pemmican was a high protein foodstuff that was vital to the trade of NWC and to an indigenous community known as the Métis, who were the masters of the annual buffalo hunt which was the main food item available in the region. The Métis were a people who largely originated from the unions between Aboriginal women and French-Canadian voyageurs, and naturally had a close relationship with the Montreal traders.⁶¹ The proclamation and subsequent seizure of pemmican from NWC canoes and posts and Métis communities brought cordial relations with the colonists to an end, and fuelled mutual resentment amongst the two opposing sides.⁶²

On 19 June 1816 the situation reached breaking point and the most tragic event in the disputes between the HBC and NWC occurred within the confines of the Red River Colony at Seven Oaks. Here, an armed confrontation erupted between the Red River settlers, now led by Governor Robert Semple, and the Métis. There are different accounts of how the event unfolded but most historians would now agree that the first act of aggression came from the colonists.⁶³ A group of 20 to 30 Métis were transporting pemmican from the NWC's post on Assiniboine River to Lake Winnipeg.⁶⁴ Governor Semple spotted the group and after one Métis rode forward to meet him, Semple attempted to take him prisoner. The rider escaped, however, after which Semple ordered his men to open fire on the fleeing target. The shots missed the rider but the other Métis opened fire in order to defend their companion, sparking generalised shooting.⁶⁵ The fighting resulted in 23 deaths, which included Governor Semple, 21 colonists, and one Métis.⁶⁶ The settlers' bodies were reportedly found 'barbarously mangled', possibly having been scalped, and so the episode became known as the Seven Oaks Massacre.⁶⁷ This was the most violent occurrence during the so-called 'civil war' phase (1811-21) of the HBC-NWC rivalry but it was far from the only disturbance.⁶⁸

Contemporary British newspapers reported that 'the disputes between the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company are among the most extraordinary

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 212-3.

⁶¹ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 109; and Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, pp. 15, 75.

⁶² Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 213, 216, 228-9.

⁶³ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 109; and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 228-9.

⁶⁴ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 228.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 229.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 229; and Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 109.

⁶⁷ *The Times*, 15 February 1817; and Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 109.

⁶⁸ For the use of the term 'civil war' to describe the occurrences see *The Lancaster Gazette*, 22 February 1817; *The Morning Post*, 6 November 1818; and *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 July 1819.

transactions permitted within the authority of regular Government'.⁶⁹ The rivalry between the two fur-trading companies in the 'Indian Country' provided a continuous stream of mayhem, scandal, and recrimination for the British press to fill their commentaries of colonial affairs between 1816 and 1820.⁷⁰ An occurrence that took place at Fort William on Lake Superior, the headquarters of the NWC, had even more far-reaching consequences for the trade of the NWC. Selkirk, who had been absent for the formative years of the Red River Colony, arrived in Montreal in 1816 and immediately set about publishing a pamphlet to smear the NWC, which responded by questioning the legality of the HBC Charter and thus Selkirk's grant in the *Montreal Gazette*.⁷¹ As reports about the Seven Oaks Massacre reached Montreal, Selkirk, frustrated at the refusal of Sir George Drummond, the Governor-General and Administrator of Canada, to offer soldiers to defend the colonists, took the law into his own hands and set about raising his own private army.⁷² This proved a straightforward task as the end of the hostilities with the United States meant that there were numerous discharged mercenaries looking for employment. Selkirk recruited 100 men from the recently disbanded 'De Meuron' regiment of Swiss mercenaries, contracted over 100 voyageurs to assist in transportation, and procured artillery equipment from the United States.⁷³ The host approached Fort William on 12 August 1816 and Selkirk issued a warrant for William McGillivray's arrest on the charges of treason, conspiracy, and as an accessory to murder.⁷⁴ McGillivray ventured out of the Fort to protest but was immediately arrested. With their leader captured and their Fort surrounded by cannon, the remaining partners surrendered themselves and Fort William to Selkirk's forces.⁷⁵ This was not the end of the matter for Selkirk, who was 'near collapse from fatigue and excitement', was told by his doctor to rest and resume his activities in the morning.⁷⁶ Selkirk begrudgingly had the NWC's possessions secured with locks and warned the partners not to touch any of them. To the

⁶⁹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 27 November 1817.

⁷⁰ For instance, articles appeared in: *The Caledonian Mercury*, 19, 29 February 1816, 2, 4 November 1816, 7 April 1817, 27 November 1817, 25 April 1818, 23 July 1818, and 3 January 1820; *The Bristol Mercury*, 4 January 1819; *The Bury and Norwich Post*, 12 November 1817; *The Examiner*, 10 November 1816; *The Hull Packet and Original Weekly Commercial, Literary and General Advertiser*, 6 July 1819; *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser*, 22 February 1817, 8 November 1817, 6 December 1817, and 3 July 1819; *The York Herald and General Advertiser*, 24 April 1819; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 21 November 1816, 19 November 1818, and 22 April 1819.

⁷¹ Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 219.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

historian's dismay, as Selkirk withdrew, the Montreal traders set about burning great batches of papers that they thought Selkirk could use to their disadvantage.⁷⁷ The next morning, furious at the partners' actions, but delighted at finding certain papers that he deemed to be incriminating, Selkirk had the NWC partners escorted under guard to Montreal. In the partners' absence, Selkirk had the posts of Rainy Lake, Fort Douglas, and Bas de la Rivière Winnipeg captured from the NWC in order to provide for his men.⁷⁸ More concerning for McGillivray was the fate of £100,000 worth of furs that were stored in the warehouses at Fort William, for their loss would cause a severe shortage of credit for the forthcoming season. Unfortunately for McGillivray, Selkirk had imprisoned three NWC clerks at Fort William and forced one of them, Daniel MacKenzie, who was allegedly kept in an intoxicated state, to sign documents that permitted Selkirk to purchase a large consignment of food from the NWC and to transfer ownership of the £100,000 worth of furs in the Fort's storehouses to Selkirk in exchange for a measly annual rental of £3,000 on the Earl's estate in Kirkcudbrightshire.⁷⁹ After securing their release in Montreal, McGillivray and the other NWC partners rescinded the coerced agreement and set about bringing order to their concern, now understandably in chaos.

The Red River Settlement, the Seven Oaks Massacre, and the capture of Fort William help to explain why the Montreal fur trade did not recover following the War of 1812. In fact, the American war could be viewed as the principal reason for the decline of the NWC and its subsequent merger with the HBC a decade later in 1821. For as the War of 1812 weakened the NWC's trade, it also made the Company more susceptible to Selkirk's dubious activities. Indeed, what the customs' records clearly show is that Selkirk and the HBC struck a critical blow to the Montreal fur trade in the second decade of the nineteenth century by preventing the NWC sufficient opportunities to improve the state of its trade.

There is, however, one problem with this rather pessimistic portrayal of the Canadian fur trade in the post-1783 period. While the official values of the Canadian fur trade substantially declined in the nineteenth century, in terms of *overall* market share the trade was remarkably resilient. Figure 2.1 displays the official values of the furs imported into Britain from each of the key regions as a percentage of the overall total imported from the Americas. The figures show that for three whole decades, from 1783-7 through

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 228-9.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 233-4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 234-5.

to 1814-7, Canada consistently provided half of all Britain's fur imports. It was only in 1818-21 that the share of furs imported from Canada notably decreased to 39 per cent. Rather than a consequence of increased competition with the HBC, Figure 2.1 suggests that this was largely because of a recovery in trade between Britain and the United States. The decline in the Canadian fur trade therefore appears to have matched broader dislocations in the overall fur trade, so much so that Canada's market share of Britain's fur imports remained largely static until the final years of the NWC. This retention of market share suggests that despite declining animal populations in old regions of the trade, the loss of access to territories south of the Great Lakes, the Red River Settlement, and more fervent competition from the HBC, the NWC remained competitive, presumably as a result of its attempts to find new acquisition areas towards the Rocky Mountains and Pacific coast that offset troubles elsewhere. In many ways 'Perseverance', the NWC motto, aptly describes how the fur trade of Montreal laboured on despite the enormous pressures placed upon it so that by 1818-21 Canada was still the prime region from which Britain imported its furs.⁸⁰ Ultimately, in terms of the volume of trade, the Canadian fur trade reached its pinnacle in the late eighteenth century and entered its twilight years in the early nineteenth century, before the subsequent shift in the centre of trade towards York Factory and Hudson's Bay.

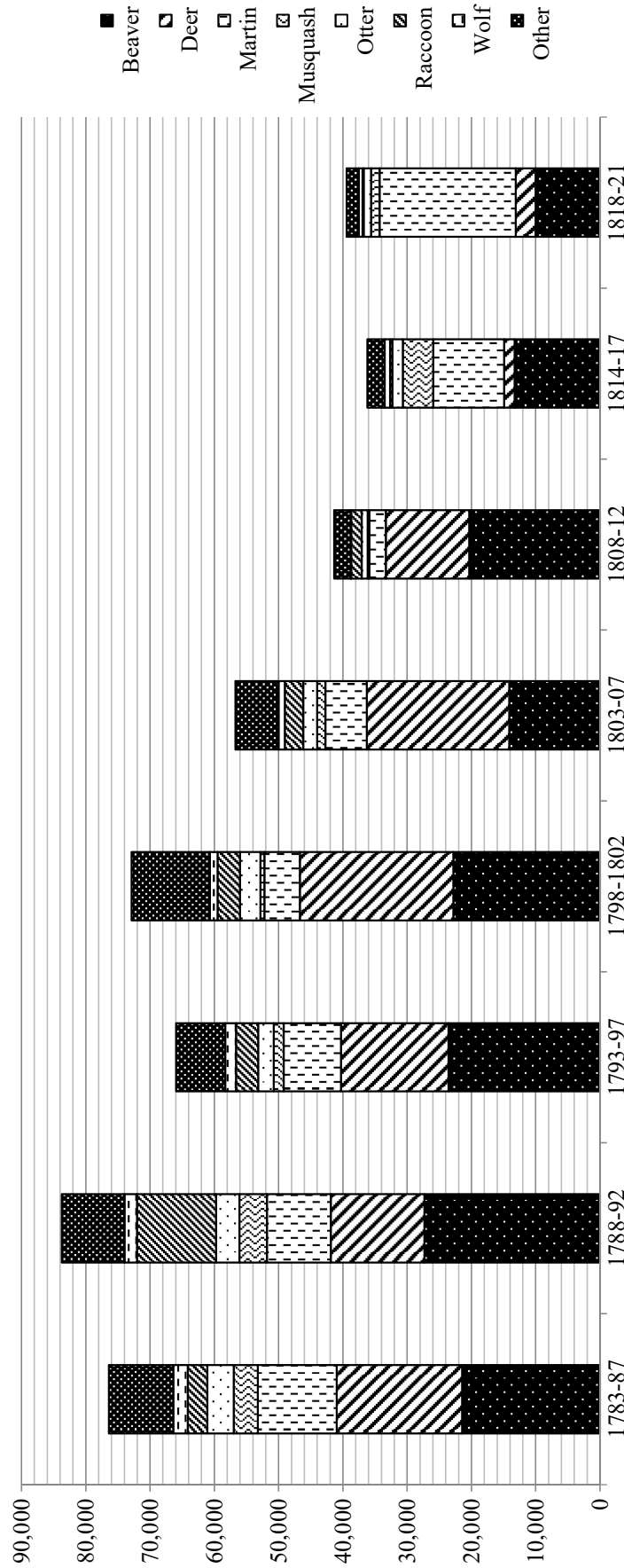
The customs' records can also be used to analyse the types of furs that were imported from Canada. As is shown in Figure 2.2, in 1783-7 the Canadian fur trade was comprised of a rather diverse assortment of furs. Beaver skins were the most significant fur that was imported and an average of £21,458 was imported each year, which made up 28 per cent of Canada's total fur exports. Indeed, the 1780s and 1790s were peak decades for the Canadian beaver trade, which never dipped below £20,000 during these years. Deer was a close second at £19,524 (26 per cent) and marten furs were the third highest at £12,240 (16 per cent).⁸¹ The disturbances to the trade over the following decades notably changed the components of the Montreal fur trade. By 1818-21, marten furs were the predominant fur type that was imported into Britain, comprising 54 per cent of fur imports from Canada with an annual average official value of £21,177.⁸² At £10,019 in 1818-21, beaver furs were less than half the value that they had comprised in 1783-7 and accounted for one-quarter of the imports. In light of the difficulties in the south-west

⁸⁰ See Figure 2.1.

⁸¹ See Figure 2.2.

⁸² See Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. Average annual official value of furs imported into Britain from Canada by type of fur, 1783-1821 (in £).



Notes: The averages were calculated using data taken directly from the British customs' records and include Scottish imports. Apart from the year 1813, the records for which were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814, all years between 1783 and 1821 were used to work out the averages. The 'other' category includes the following skins: black bear, calabar, cat, coney, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, hare, mink, squirrel, seal, and other miscellaneous skins. Unfortunately, Lawson's customs' data, as delineated by fur type, group the imports from the Thirteen Colonies, Canada, and Hudson's Bay under a 'continental colonies' category and so cannot be used for comparison.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*.

trade, Britain's deer imports from Canada had diminished to a mere £3,092 or 8 per cent of the overall total.⁸³

By the end of the period, therefore, the Canadian fur trade was far less diverse and was increasingly reliant on the trade in marten furs. It thus appears that there was a degree of elasticity in the fur trade and that problems in one branch of the trade could potentially be offset by developing the trade in other fur varieties. Although they did not elevate the Montreal fur trade to its former heights, marten furs clearly acted as a buffer against the respective declines in the Canadian deer and beaver trades.

III. Britain and the US Fur Trade

The decline of the Canadian fur trade is the central pattern that is identifiable from the fur import data contained within the British customs' records. But the statistics also enable a detailed analysis of the respective fur trades of the United States and Hudson's Bay. British fur imports from the United States were rather more volatile than those from Canada. In terms of official values, the United States remained the second most important supplier of furs to Britain until 1808-12, when the trade collapsed in line with Anglo-American trade generally as the United States Congress passed the Embargo Act of 1807 in response to Britain's disregard for American neutrality in the Napoleonic Wars and the outbreak of the Anglo-American War of 1812-4.⁸⁴ For a whole decade, poor relations between the two countries severely limited Britain's imports of furs from the United States; Britain's average yearly fur imports from the region declined from an official value of £21,366 in 1803-7 to just £3,026 in 1808-12. It seems probable that, after 1800, American merchants either became much more active in exporting furs directly to continental European markets, stockpiled the furs in warehouses and waited for trading conditions to improve, or exported their skins to China.

Table 2.3 compares the number of beaver furs exported from the United States to Britain from the British custom's records with the exports of US furs to China, the latter of which is derived from a paper submitted by Charles Grant, former director of the EIC, to a Parliamentary Committee in 1821.⁸⁵ The table shows that US beaver furs were

⁸³ See Figure 2.2.

⁸⁴ See Figure 2.1; and Clayton, 'American Fur Trade', p. 162.

⁸⁵ TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; TNA, CUST 4/5-13, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*; *Report [relative to the trade with the East Indies and China,] from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the means of extending and securing the foreign trade of the country, and to report to the House; together with the*

Table 2.3. Number of beaver furs exported from the United States to Britain and China, 1804-18.

	Britain	China	Total
1804	134	8,756	8,890
1805	622	34,464	35,086
1806	8,050	23,368	31,418
1807	4,660	11,750	16,410
1808	1,233	5,170	6,403
1809	53	20,000	20,053
1810	13	14,200	14,213
1811	2	20,000	20,002
1812	42	2,330	2,372
1813	N/A	3,928	3,928
1814	0	Merged with above	-
1815	0	168	168
1816	2,488	1,579	4,067
1817	1,021	15,067	16,088
1818	9,897	15,570	25,467
Total	28,215 (14%)	176,350 (86%)	204,565

Notes: The figures for China are probably more inaccurate than those for Britain which were taken from the British customs' records. This is because the China data are not derived from official American or Chinese figures but rather made from the observations of the EIC's officers in Canton.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/26-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1804-8; TNA, CUST 4/5-13, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-18; and *Report [relative to the trade with the East Indies and China,] from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the means of extending and securing the foreign trade of the country, and to report to the House; together with the minutes of evidence taken in sessions 1820 and 1821, before the said committee* (P.P. 1821, Vol.VII.1), p. 187.

predominantly exported to China, even before the War of 1812. In fact, between 1804 and 1818, 86 per cent of the beaver furs were exported to China, whereas only 14 per cent

minutes of evidence taken in sessions 1820 and 1821, before the said committee (P.P. 1821, Vol.VII.1), p. 187; and C. H. Philips and D. Philips, 'Alphabetical List of Directors of the East India Company from 1758 to 1858', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (1941), pp. 325-36.

were traded in Britain.⁸⁶ The low proportion of US beaver furs exported to Britain was not a consequence of deteriorating Anglo-American relations or Napoleon's Continental Blockade. Fewer beaver pelts were actually exported from the US to Britain on average each year in 1783-1803 (1,671 pelts) than in 1804-18 (2,015 pelts).⁸⁷ Rather than export beaver furs to London, which was well stocked with high-quality pelts from Canada and Hudson's Bay, US merchants clearly sent a large proportion of their beaver to China.⁸⁸ Silks, porcelain, tea, and other 'China goods' could be purchased for the return voyage from Canton. Indeed, furs were one of the few imported commodities for which the Chinese market had a high demand. Unfortunately, it is not clear how important mainland Europe was for US fur exports. The 1790s and early 1800s was a period when US merchants became heavily involved in the colonial carrying trade to Europe, especially in Caribbean coffee and sugar.⁸⁹ Furs were likely another key US export to Europe until the Continental Blockade. The US-China trade was also not immune to wartime disruption, as it is clear from Grant's provided statistics that American traders found it increasingly difficult to access the China trade in 1812-6, most likely due to the threat of capture by the Royal Navy. In 1811, American beaver exports to China numbered 20,000 pelts but with the outbreak of war the trade did not reach above 4,000 until 1817, when it rebounded sharply.⁹⁰

Since the United States was the second largest supplier of furs to Britain prior to 1808-12, and in light of the marginal Anglo-American trade in beaver fur, US fur exports to Britain were evidently comprised of other important fur varieties. Figure 2.3 charts the official value of furs imported into Britain from the United States and delineates them by type of fur. Most striking is the predominance of deer. Between 1783 and 1807 well over 50 per cent of the official value of US fur exports to Britain was made up of deer, and they rose to above three-quarters of all exports between 1793 and 1802.⁹¹ Bear, marten, and mink furs were other notable imports in particular years.⁹² On the other hand, beaver exports were only the fifth highest and were virtually negligible until the end of the

⁸⁶ See Table 2.3.

⁸⁷ TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; TNA, CUST 4/5-13, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*.

⁸⁸ On the use of fur in the US-China trade see Gibson, *Otter Skins*, especially pp. 54, 95, 101.

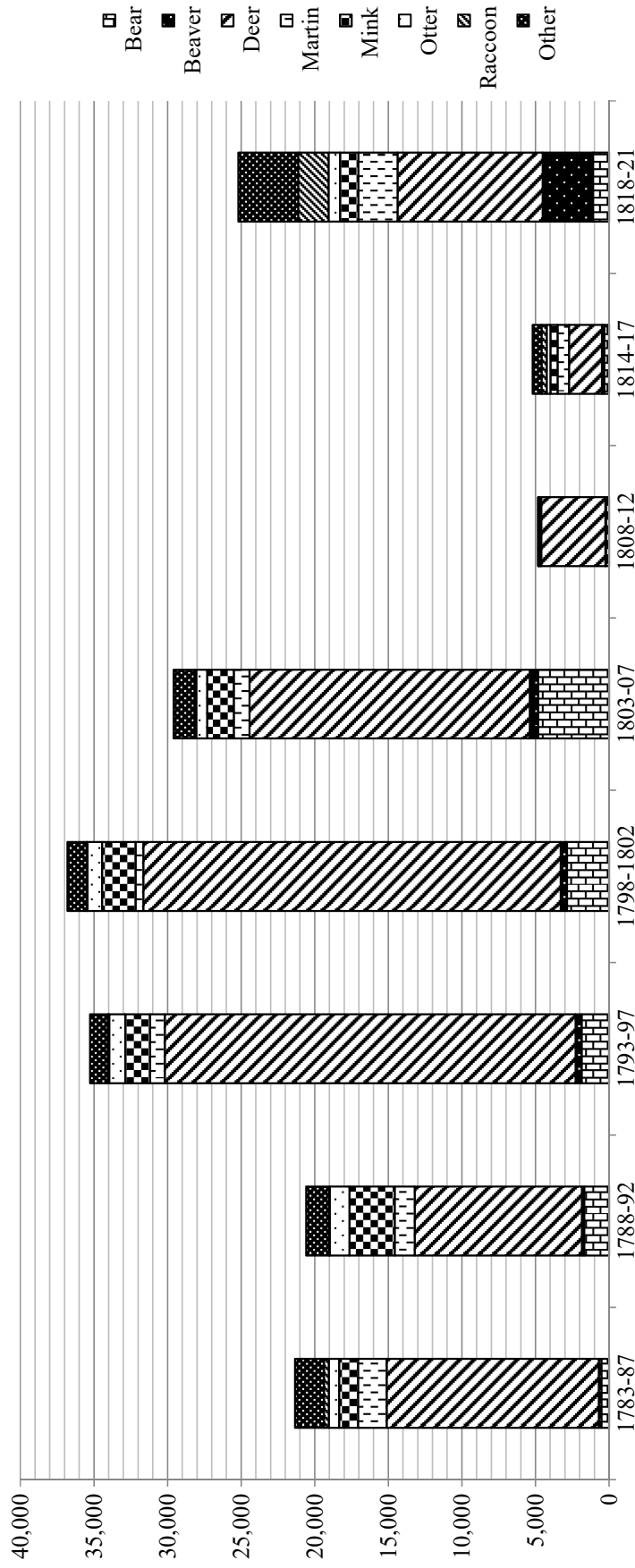
⁸⁹ Nash, 'British Atlantic Economy', pp. 119-20. Also see Michelle Craig McDonald, 'The Chance of the Moment: Coffee and the New West Indies Commodity Trade', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (2005), pp. 441-72.

⁹⁰ See Table 2.3.

⁹¹ See Figure 2.3.

⁹² See Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3. Average annual official value of furs imported into Britain from the United States by type of fur, 1783-1821 (in £).



Notes: The averages were calculated using data taken directly from the British customs' records and include Scottish imports. Apart from the year 1813, the records for which were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814, all years between 1783 and 1821 were used to work out the averages. The 'other' category includes the following skins: calabar, cat, coney, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, hare, musquash, seal, squirrel, wolf, and other miscellaneous skins. Unfortunately, Lawson's customs' data, as delineated by fur type, groups the imports from the Thirteen Colonies, Canada, and Hudson's Bay under a 'continental colonies' category and so cannot be used for comparison.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*.

Table 2.4. Average annual number of deer imported into Britain from Canada, Florida, and the United States, 1783-1821.

	Canada	Florida	United States	Total
1783-87	149,089 (35%)	139,798 (33%)	134,817 (32%)	423,704
1788-92	116,050 (31%)	161,792 (44%)	92,671 (25%)	370,514
1793-97	133,734 (31%)	83,672 (20%)	207,572 (49%)	424,977
1798-1802	191,057 (41%)	47,005 (10%)	226,603 (49%)	464,666
1803-07	177,247 (50%)	27,164 (8%)	150,321 (42%)	354,731
1808-12	103,786 (75%)	180 (0%)	35,146 (25%)	139,111
1814-17	13,274 (25%)	9,061 (17%)	29,751 (57%)	52,086
1818-21	24,593 (24%)	0 (0%)	79,459 (76%)	104,051
Overall Average	113,604 (39%)	58,584 (20%)	119,543 (41%)	291,730

Notes: The averages were calculated using data taken directly from the British customs' records and include Scottish imports. Apart from the year 1813, the records for which were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814, all years between 1783 and 1821 were used to work out the averages. Overall, Canada, Florida, and the United States made up 93 per cent of Britain's deer imports from all parts of the world.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21.

period. As previously discussed, Canada was another region that supplied significant quantities of deer to the British market. Table 2.4 compares British deer imports from Canada, Florida, and the United States. Before 1800, Florida, a Spanish colony until 1819, was a major source of Britain's deer skins and in 1788-92 accounted for 44 per cent of these imports, substantially more than the quantities provided by either Canada or the United States.⁹³ Over the period as a whole, Canada and the United States supplied similar quantities of deer to the British market but when smaller time periods are analysed there are noticeable changes in their relative importance. In the 1780s over 30 per cent of the deer originated from the Canadian branch of the trade but there was a marked growth in US deer imports during the 1790s. In 1793-7, 49 per cent of Britain's deer imports came from the United States, with an average of 207,000 deer imported each year, an increase

⁹³ See Table 2.4. East and West Florida were British colonies that were formed from French and Spanish territories that were acquired in 1763 and remained under British control until 1783 when the Treaty of Paris returned ownership to Spain. Much of the British deer trade with Florida was undertaken by Panton, Leslie & Co. of Pensacola, Florida, who were shipping over 100,000 deer a year to England by the 1780s. See Waselkov, 'Anglo-Indian Trade', p. 204.

on the 135,000 in 1783-7.⁹⁴ This upsurge did not last. Total deer imports from the two regions peaked in 1798-1802 but thereafter began to decline. The trade collapsed in the second decade of the nineteenth century and only 52,086 deer were annually imported in 1814-17.⁹⁵ The American branch was the first to deteriorate, especially after 1808, and a similar albeit slower decline befell the Canadian deer trade.

The rise and decline of the deer trade during this period had both supply and demand-based factors. On the supply side, war between Britain and the United States clearly disrupted the trade but the Creek Civil War of 1813-4 — which pitted the Red Stick Cree against the Lower Creeks, Cherokee, Choctaw, and United States — led to the cessation of 30 million acres of land in the modern-day states of Georgia and Alabama to the United States in the Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814).⁹⁶ The deer population also declined as a result of over-hunting and the growth in livestock agriculture.⁹⁷ On the demand side, European consumers' use of deerskin breeches declined after 1800 as trousers made from woollen or cotton fabrics became more fashionable.⁹⁸ Furthermore, as is shown in chapter four, sealskin became a popular material for gloves, footwear, and book-bindings in early-nineteenth-century Britain. There is also the issue of whether American merchants developed their own carrying trade in furs after 1800, one that conveyed their procured skins directly to European markets. The establishment of such ventures likely started much sooner, as the historiographical literature emphasises the strong growth in US shipping and overseas trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁹⁹ It is, however, somewhat less clear whether US merchants continued to be as active in directly conveying goods to European markets after the outbreak of the War of 1812. Most historians argue that the conflict severely hampered US overseas trade in the Atlantic, as well as on the north-west coast of North America.¹⁰⁰ If US overseas trade was indeed crippled by the hostilities, then it would be expected that furs accumulated in US merchant warehouses.

The disruption of the overall Anglo-American fur trade was only temporary, as by 1818-21 Britain's fur imports from the United States had recovered to pre-1807 levels.

⁹⁴ See Table 2.4.

⁹⁵ See Table 2.4.

⁹⁶ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, pp. 186-8; and Richards, *The World Hunt*, p. 40.

⁹⁷ Richards, *The World Hunt*, p. 40.

⁹⁸ John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 39, 87-8.

⁹⁹ See Nash, 'British Atlantic Economy', especially pp. 119-20.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

The collapse of the American branch of the trade and its subsequent recovery suggests that US fur exports to Britain were used to finance the purchase of British manufactured goods, which rose to peak levels in 1815 and 1816.¹⁰¹ The imported furs were then purchased by British merchants and tradesmen for re-export to European markets or used to produce manufactures for domestic consumption or export. Such a relationship would explain the swift recovery in this facet of Anglo-American trade. By 1817-8 (£23,134), the average annual official value of Britain's fur imports from the United States was above that which they had been in 1806-7 (£16,843).¹⁰² This view is further substantiated by Clayton's findings that Britain received 74 per cent of the value of US fur exports between 1822 and 1890.¹⁰³

One final aspect that the customs' records can reveal about the nature of the Anglo-American fur trade is with regard to the individual states that supplied furs to Britain. Table 2.5 displays the total official value of furs imported into Britain from each state over the entire period under study and further delineates the imports by fur type. The whole trade was actually rather dispersed; the fur-trading centres of New York and Pennsylvania only handled 40 per cent of Britain's fur imports from the United States.¹⁰⁴ In fact, South Carolina was the State where most of the imports originated, accounting for 24 per cent of the imports with an overall official value of £207,000.¹⁰⁵ New England was another notable source at £124,000 or 14 per cent of the US imports. The trade was much smaller in the other States but the 7 per cent from North Carolina and the same from Louisiana were not insignificant. There was a clear distinction between the 'northern' and 'southern' states. Deer comprised over 95 per cent of the fur imports from the southern states of North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana.¹⁰⁶ As the trade moved north, the deer trade became less important. For Virginia and Maryland, deer made up around 80 per cent of their fur exports to Britain, whereas they were less prevalent in the trade of Pennsylvania (59 per cent), New York (53 per cent), and New England (8 per cent). South Carolina, and no doubt the port town of Charleston, was the centre of the US deer trade and the fur traders in the southern states were far more specialised in the trade of deer

¹⁰¹ This was certainly the case for merchants in New York from the late-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries. See Norton, *Fur Trade*, pp. 83, 101.

¹⁰² TNA, CUST 17/28-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1806-7; and TNA, CUST 4/11-2, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1816-7.

¹⁰³ Clayton, 'American Fur Trade', p. 162.

¹⁰⁴ See Table 2.5.

¹⁰⁵ See Table 2.5.

¹⁰⁶ See Table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Overall official value of furs imported into Britain from the United States by State and type of fur, 1783-1821 (in £).

	New England	New York	Pennsylvania	Maryland ^a	Virginia	North Carolina ^b	South Carolina	Georgia	Louisiana	Total
Bear	12,209	22,442	26,890	479	628	390	1,771	75	733	65,617
Beaver	1,503	14,780	4,108	529	10	429	1,640	184	19	23,202
Deer	9,293	102,911	90,119	18,414	5,302	54,054	199,433	45,127	55,783	580,436
Fox	11,848	3,384	1,322	70	14	26	208	19	4	16,895
Martin	29,513	11,206	2,640	0	53	19	0	0	0	43,431
Mink	38,148	9,308	10,147	401	177	45	30	0	1	58,257
Musquash	2,050	9,083	2,247	871	23	0	2	0	0	14,276
Otter	7,465	8,068	9,182	214	84	365	2,198	100	808	28,484
Other ^c	11,779	13,089	6,802	2,120	670	1,262	1,403	732	38	37,894
Total	123,808 (14%)	194,271 (22%)	153,457 (18%)	23,098 (3%)	6,961 (1%)	56,590 (7%)	206,685 (24%)	46,237 (5%)	57,386 (7%)	868,492

Notes:

^a Includes imports from Virginia until the latter is listed separately in 1788.

^b Includes imports from South Carolina until the latter is listed separately in 1788.

^c Includes calabar, cat, coney, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, hare, sable, squirrel, seal, wolf, and other miscellaneous skins.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*.

than their northern counterparts. Deer was still by far the most significant fur type that Pennsylvania and New York exported to Britain but their consignments were much more diverse and comprised notable amounts of bear, beaver, marten, mink, musquash, and otter skins. Whereas the fur trade in the northern states was less dependent on a single fur type, there was evidently some degree of specialisation in each state; 64 per cent of US beaver exports to Britain originated from New York. The fur trade of New England, a region that was largely thought to have undergone severe resource depletion, comprised the bulk of US fox (70 per cent), marten (68 per cent), and mink (65 per cent) exports.¹⁰⁷ Thus, as in the Canadian fur trade, trouble in New England's supply of beaver furs seemingly stimulated the exploitation of other fur varieties.

IV. The Hudson's Bay Fur Trade

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a period when the HBC attempted to expand its share of the fur trade by moving the Company's point of contact with Aboriginal fur traders away from Hudson's Bay and into the interior of North America. The Company exclusively shipped furs from the Bay at this time and since the British customs' records listed the region in its own individual category, the trade statistics can be used as a way of measuring the success of the Company's new inland trading strategy.

In the 1780s and 1790s the HBC greatly enlarged the number of servants in its employ so that it had the manpower required to transport goods to and from inland posts. Despite the Company's larger payroll, the import ledgers indicate that the return on this greater investment was modest. The average number of servants in the Company's employ increased by 42 per cent between 1785-92 (282 servants) and 1793-1800 (485 servants) yet the average annual official value of the imported furs was only 23 per cent higher in 1793-1802 (£17,284) than it had been in 1783-92 (£13,236).¹⁰⁸ Despite further expansion in the workforce, albeit now at a slower rate, an increasing pool of servants trained in the art of inland navigation, and a new settlement colony that was obliged to provide recruits to the Company, imports were lower in 1803-7 (£15,121), 1808-12 (£15,967), and 1814-17 (£15,018) than they were in 1798-1802. It was not until the very end of the period that the most substantial expansion in the trade occurred, when the

¹⁰⁷ See Table 2.5.

¹⁰⁸ See Table 1.1 and Figure 2.1.

official value of fur imports from the Bay increased to £24,259, a 60 per cent rise on the preceding average, suggesting that the Company struck a critical blow to the Montreal traders in the aftermath of the events at Seven Oaks and the capture of Fort William. Even so, analysing the ratio of fur imports in relation to the number of servants employed suggests a clear problem at the heart of the efforts of the HBC: the Company's inability to make its increased capital investments yield a favourable return. In fact, these ratios point towards the Company's operations actually becoming less productive. Using the average annual official value of fur imports from Hudson's Bay for 1783-92 (£13,236) and the average number of servants employed by the Company each year between 1785 and 1792 (282 servants) yields a ratio of £47 for every one servant.¹⁰⁹ By the end of the period this ratio had decreased to £38 per servant.¹¹⁰ While Ann Carlos points out that the HBC was close to bankruptcy as a result of Napoleon's Continental Blockade, the analysis here suggests that the Company faced a more long-term dilemma over how to make its inland ventures worthwhile.¹¹¹ Over-trapping and intensive competition with the NWC resulted in the HBC's trade not keeping pace with the growth in the Company's workforce. Indeed, this predicament no doubt helps to explain why the Company was so fixated on finding the archetypal servant during this period, and why it decided to risk combining trade with colonisation in territories that relied upon the support of Aboriginal peoples.

Considering that the HBC first embarked upon its new commercial strategy in the 1770s, it took almost 40 years for the Company to establish a firm hold on inland trade and it seems likely that this foothold was largely acquired because of the difficulties faced by the Montreal traders. It was, therefore, not so much a case that the Company enticed Aboriginal traders away from the NWC but rather that the War of 1812 and Selkirk's actions disrupted the operations of the latter. This raises the question as to why the HBC was seemingly so ineffective at increasing its market share for most of the period. Historians have long emphasised the pivotal role played by the cost of physical barriers in the demise of the NWC and its subsequent merger with the HBC. Harold Innis and E. E. Rich supported such an interpretation by highlighting the lower transportation costs for goods consigned to the north-west via the Hudson's Bay route rather than through

¹⁰⁹ See Table 1.1 and Figure 2.1.

¹¹⁰ This ratio was calculated by taking the annual average official value of the imported furs between 1814 and 1821 (£19,639) and comparing this to the 506 servants that were on average employed by the Company each year between 1812 and 1819.

¹¹¹ Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 100-6.

Montreal, discerning that such an advantage ultimately enabled the HBC to trump its southern counterpart.¹¹² It would be logical to expect, however, that if geographic factors had caused the union then the HBC would have had both greater and more consistent success at increasing its own market share at the expense of the Canadian fur trade. Instead, the HBC appears to have not been in a position to capitalise on its more advantageous route into the interior, an advantage that William McGillivray determined enabled the HBC to transfer goods at less than half the cost of the NWC.¹¹³

There are several possible explanations as to why the HBC largely failed to increase its share of the trade through commercial competition. Provisioning is one largely neglected factor. The posts of the HBC were especially reliant on imported foodstuffs, whereas the NWC could procure provisions in Montreal. Until the War of 1812, therefore, the NWC was able to avoid the high war-induced inflation that affected Britain in the 1790s and 1800s, a factor that may have negated the HBC's cost advantage over the shipping of trade goods.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the prices of the HBC's provisions rose by 60 per cent between 1803-4 and 1808-9.¹¹⁵ Another possible factor concerns the Company's workforce. While the Company made huge strides to create a labour force that could match that of the NWC and their French-Canadian voyageurs, the skills gap may well have been too great to be filled by sojourning servants, a view that is certainly supported by the HBC's increased use of North American servants and Red River colonists. Indeed, the supply of men was the main benefit that Selkirk proposed to the HBC's shareholders while negotiating his land grant, promising to provide the Company with 200 'effective men' each year.¹¹⁶ The 'poaching' of experienced and innovative explorers such as David Thompson by the NWC was also a huge blow to Company's endeavours.¹¹⁷ It does not appear that the quality of trade goods stocked by the HBC's posts impeded its attempts at trade expansion, as the Company gathered commercial intelligence on the commodity specifications that appealed to Aboriginal peoples, and then used this information to inform its export procurement (chapter three).

While the customs' data reveal the slow growth in the HBC's trade and cast doubt on the Company's ability to compete commercially with the Montreal traders, analysing

¹¹² Innis, *Fur Trade in Canada*, especially pp. 158, 164, 387; and Rich, *Montreal*, especially p. 98.

¹¹³ Campbell, *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest*, p. 303.

¹¹⁴ Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 21, 107-8, 168-9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

¹¹⁶ HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 30 May 1811, fo. 36.

¹¹⁷ Campbell, *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 105-7.

the Hudson's Bay, Canadian, and American fur trades in terms of their overall market share presents a more favourable view of the HBC's efforts. Because of the decline in total British fur imports, the Company's share of the fur trade gradually increased over the period. In 1783-7, the HBC supplied a mere 7 per cent of Britain's fur imports, yet the Company provided almost one-quarter by 1818-21. Perhaps during a rather turbulent period maintaining a stable trade was a success in itself.

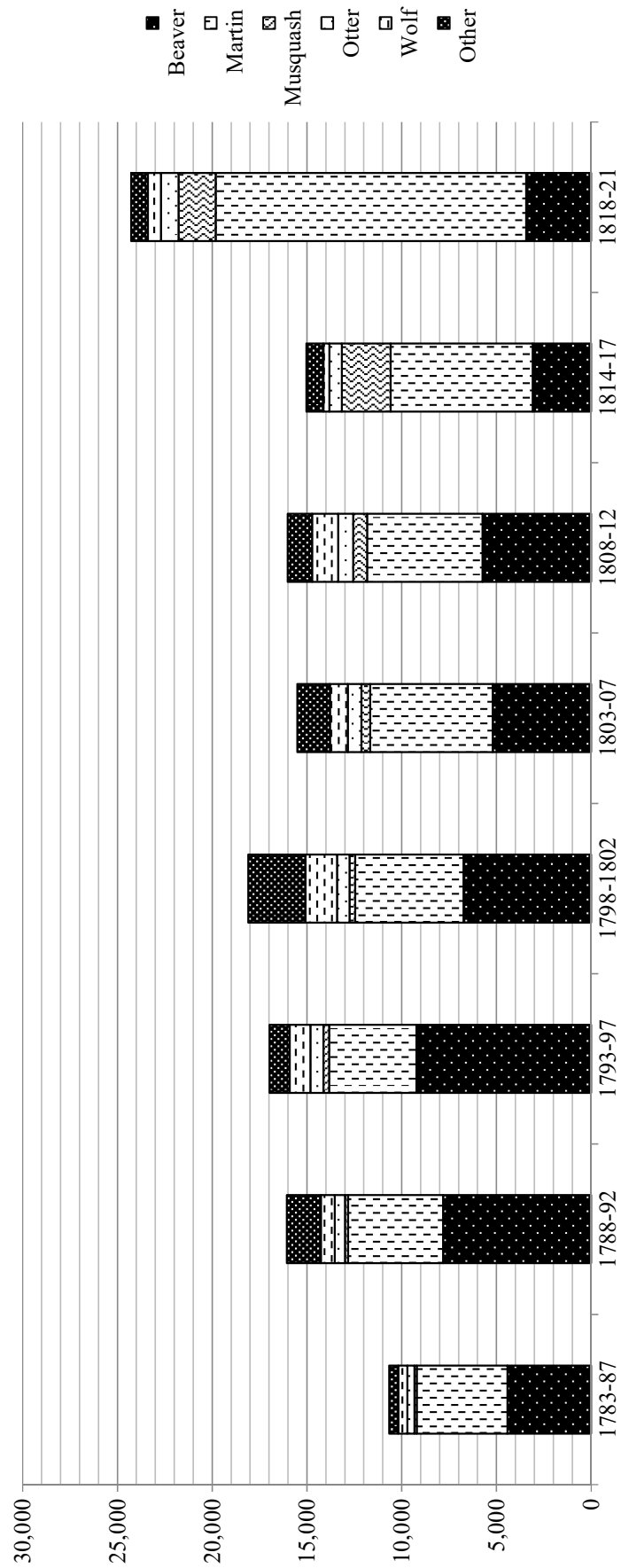
While British fur imports from the United States were heavily focused on deer and those from Canada were comprised of a more diverse assortment of furs, imports from Hudson's Bay were primarily centred on two types of skins; beaver and marten. As Figure 2.4 shows, before 1800 beaver furs made up around half of the exports from Hudson's Bay but they subsequently declined to reach a mere 14 per cent by 1818-21.¹¹⁸ The official value also slightly declined over the period, from £4,471 in 1783-7 to £3,436 in 1818-21. The HBC, like the Montreal traders, thus seemingly found it very difficult to maintain its beaver trade at this time, which led to a focus on alternative varieties of fur. Marten furs had always made up a notable share of the Company's imports into Britain and they made up no less than 27 per cent of the HBC's imports until the second decade of the nineteenth century. There was a notable upturn in marten furs after 1812 to the extent to which they made up 67 per cent of the skins by 1818-21. In fact, marten furs actually accounted for a greater share of HBC fur imports than beaver for five of the eight averages analysed here.¹¹⁹ While the beaver trade declined in volume, martens were seemingly in good supply as an annual average of £16,383 was imported in 1818-21, more than triple the £4,789 imported in 1783-7. Both the HBC and the Montreal fur traders compensated for declining returns of beaver with increased procurements of martens, although the trade in the latter was always considerable.

The shift towards marten skins in the second decade of the nineteenth century may also point towards changes in European consumption patterns as well as indicating a degree of elasticity of supply. Consumer studies of the fur trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are few in number but overwhelmingly focus on the rise of beaver and felt hats in the apparel of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century consumers. In light of the prevalence of Britain's imports of deer and marten furs, analysis into the consumption of these articles within Britain would no doubt be a useful addition to the

¹¹⁸ See Figure 2.4.

¹¹⁹ See Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4. Average annual official value of furs imported into Britain from Hudson's Bay by type of fur, 1783-1821 (in £).



Notes: The averages were calculated using data taken directly from the British customs' records and include Scottish imports. Apart from the year 1813, the records for which were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814, all years between 1783 and 1821 were used to work out the averages. The 'other' category includes the following skins: black bear, calabar, cat, coney, deer, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, hare, mink, raccoon, squirrel, and other miscellaneous skins. Unfortunately, Lawson's customs' data, as delineated by fur type, groups the imports from the Thirteen Colonies, Canada, and Hudson's Bay under a 'continental colonies' category and so cannot be used for comparison.

Source: The National Archives (TNA), CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*.

historical literature of the eighteenth-century ‘consumer revolution’, a subject that will be returned to in chapter five.

V. *The Hudson’s Bay Company Prevails: The emergence of monopoly*

By 1821, the Montreal fur trade had substantially declined in scale but it was still the most important source of Britain’s fur imports, a larger enterprise than either the fur trades of the HBC or the United States. But when, on 5 December 1821, the NWC and HBC merged, under the banner of the chartered company, it was not on equal terms, for while the NWC held a greater slice of the fur trade the balance of power within the new HBC was decidedly against the former NWC. The new HBC was overseen by a joint board of management composed of five members; two from each of the former companies and the fifth being the governor or deputy-governor of the old HBC.¹²⁰ In addition, the shares were also not equally split as the former NWC was granted only £100,000 worth of shares in the new HBC, as opposed to the £150,000 held by the old HBC.¹²¹ Over the next few years many of the former partners of the NWC were slowly edged out of the management of the trade so that by 1825 the so-called ‘second part’ of the combined enterprise had vanished from the HBC’s books. Indeed, in 1824 William McGillivray was ousted and the joint board of management was abolished.¹²² What was sold as a ‘union’ was in truth ‘absorption’.¹²³

This leads to two questions. First, why did the NWC become the weaker partner in the joint concern when, according to the customs’ ledgers, the company controlled a higher proportion of the trade even after the disruptions of 1818-21? Second, why did the HBC retain its Charter and indeed acquire a monopoly of the fur trade at a time when, on the other side of the world, the trading privileges of the EIC were in retreat? These questions are all the more pertinent in light of the decline of chartered companies in British overseas trade during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The decline of the ‘free’ NWC traders and the conferral of a *de facto* monopoly of the British fur trade to the HBC runs counter to the broader historical trend of trade liberalisation.

The answer to the first question principally rests on the different forms of trade organisation of the two companies. The NWC was a loose association that relied on

¹²⁰ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 295.

¹²¹ HBCA, A.1/52, *London Minute Book*, 1818-21, fo. 104.

¹²² Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 322-3.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 322-3.

cooperation between the mercantile agents in Montreal and Fort William, and the inland clerks, traders, and partners. The ‘bourgeois’ and the ‘wintering partners’ shared their resources and expertise in order to conduct an advantageous trade that reduced the ruinous impact of competition, a feature that was so evident during the operation of the XYC, and which acted to maintain profitability. Conversely, the HBC, as a joint-stock company, was less dependent upon cooperation as control ultimately rested within a small executive committee that was drawn from the prominent shareholders. The ownership of all assets rested solely with the registered Company. Disgruntled shareholders and committee members could therefore sell their shares without necessitating the removal of resources from the enterprise. This key difference was a central reason for the demise of the NWC, as any division between the wintering partners and bourgeois would endanger the cooperative spirit that sustained the Company’s existence.¹²⁴

Such a split occurred in 1819-21 as the latest NWC Agreement neared its end. Unknown to the bourgeois, representatives of the wintering partners had secretly sent overtures to Selkirk’s lawyer in Montreal to enquire as to whether the HBC would consider becoming the supplier of their trade goods rather than McTavish, McGillivrays as per their current arrangements.¹²⁵ In the autumn of 1819, William McGillivray had journeyed to London to conduct business and had left Dr McLoughlin in charge of Fort William.¹²⁶ Upon his return the following year, McGillivray learned that McLoughlin had warmly received a visit from a new HBC clerk by the name of George Simpson.¹²⁷ McGillivray’s suspicions were confirmed at a meeting with the wintering partners at Fort William, when his attempts to negotiate a renewed partnership agreement were thwarted by the revelation that several dissident winterers were planning to make arrangements with another supply firm that McGillivray correctly presumed was the HBC.¹²⁸ The rift between winterer and agent jeopardised the future continuation of the NWC, which was still in financial disarray and was in desperate need of credit.¹²⁹ As the leaders of the 18

¹²⁴ Heather Devine has argued that the NWC’s inability to evolve its corporate structure away from the Loyalist oligarchy of Upper and Lower Canada was a key reason for the difficulties that faced the Company in the second decade of the nineteenth century. See Heather Devine, ‘Ambition versus Loyalty: Miles Macdonell and the Decline of the North West Company’, in Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, William Wicken, eds., *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1998), pp. 247-81.

¹²⁵ Campbell, *The North West Company*, p. 266.

¹²⁶ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 278-82.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

dissident winterers, McLoughlin and Angus Bethune, travelled to London to meet with the HBC Committee, the NWC's agents drew up a plan to launch a campaign in Parliament against the HBC's Charter by tapping into anti-monopoly sentiment amongst the British public and by galvanising the support of the Anglo-Canadian community in London.¹³⁰ Contrary to the original plan, however, Simon McGillivray, brother of William McGillivray and the NWC's agent in this matter, together with the assistance of Edward Ellice, opted to open negotiations with the HBC in a bid to arrange a union between the chartered company and the NWC.

In December 1820, Andrew Wedderburn Colville, Lady Selkirk's brother and HBC Committee member, received representatives from the two discordant parties.¹³¹ At first, the offers from both interests were met with little enthusiasm from the HBC. A second meeting between Colville, Simon McGillivray, and Ellice, resulted in a proposed union that was acceptable to both parties. Forced to remain in Canada as a result of his efforts to stabilise the NWC, William McGillivray would later lament his brother's bargaining efforts. The split within the NWC had compelled Simon and Ellice to accept a union on far lesser terms than that proposed in previous attempts over the past three decades.¹³² Simon McGillivray's inexperience in such high-stakes business negotiations may well have weakened the agents hand but it was ultimately Ellice who was the key player. Ellice had become MP for Coventry in 1818, had strong personal and business ties to Canada, was a frequent speaker on Canadian issues in the British Parliament, and had been a

¹³⁰ Campbell, *The North West Company*, p. 281.

¹³¹ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 291.

¹³² The NWC (including the XYC) made at least nine attempts between 1783 and 1821 to gain access to the Hudson's Bay route into the interior: 1) Simon McTavish attempted to secure lease rights through Hudson's Bay from the HBC and was unsuccessful (c.1790); 2) McTavish meets with William Pitt the Younger in London in a bid to have the HBC's Charter revoked (c.1790); 3) William McGillivray, Edward Ellice, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie attempt to buy enough stock in the HBC to force a union, which failed by a small margin (1804-5); 4) McTavish attempts to force the HBC to agree to a union by setting up three trading posts in James Bay (1804); 5) William McGillivray offers £2,000 per annum for transport rights through Hudson's Bay in return for the NWC withdrawing from its posts in Hudson's Bay (1805); 6) MacKenzie attempts to acquire a Charter for the NWC from the British Board of Trade but is refused on the grounds that it could infringe upon the territory of the United States and lead to hostilities (c.1808); 7) During a meeting in Montreal with the Earl of Selkirk, the Montreal traders offer a union with the HBC on the terms of one-third of the shares going to the HBC and two-thirds to the NWC but Selkirk refuses and it becomes clear that Selkirk only sought for the NWC to recognise the HBC's Charter (1816); 8) Ellice attempts to convince Selkirk to sell his shares in the HBC (1819); 9) The original plan of William and Simon McGillivray and Ellice to mitigate the threat posed by the winterers was to launch a campaign in Parliament against the HBC's Charter by tapping into anti-monopoly sentiment amongst the British public and by galvanising the support of the Anglo-Canadian community in London. Instead of this course of action, Simon and Ellice negotiate a union on terms that were less palatable to William McGillivray. See Campbell, *The North West Company*, pp. 70-3, 139-41, 158, 176-7, 219-20, 248-50, 281; and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 13, 62-3, 133, 172, 177.

shareholder in the HBC since at least 1811.¹³³ Ellice had a plan to unify the two competing companies, a proposition that was attractive to Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, for the on-going disturbances in the fur trade following the Seven Oaks Massacre were of deep concern to the Colonial Office.¹³⁴ In November 1816, Sir John C. Sherbrooke, Governor-in-Chief of British North America, had written to Bathurst to warn him of the dangers posed by instability in the 'Indian' territories.¹³⁵ Not only did the conflict between the two companies disrupt trade, it also threatened the security of Upper Canada for the Métis, though loyal to the NWC, would 'in the event of their [the NWC's] fall, easily persuade the Indians, as the lords of the soil, to expel the white inhabitants from the whole western territory'.¹³⁶ Sherbrooke further warned that relations with the United States could be worsened by the conflict, especially as the Métis supposedly 'look that way for assistance to assert their independence, and express an intention of sending delegates to Washington in the Spring'.¹³⁷

Bathurst saw the benefits of Ellice's idea of a lasting union between the two companies, which would bring order to this distant part of the Empire. Bathurst thus promised Ellice that he would enact a special Act of Parliament that would enable the Privy Council to grant a 21-year exclusive right to trade in Athabasca, the Mackenzie basin, New Caledonia, and the Pacific slope, or in other words, the entirety of the territories explored by British subjects on the North American continent that were not claimed by a foreign power, had already been colonised, or were a part of the HBC's Charter (Rupert's Land).¹³⁸ Upon the merger of the two companies, Bathurst would then have the Council confer this grant to the HBC and the former proprietors of the NWC. Significantly, none of the clauses inserted into the *Act to Regulate the Fur Trade* affected the HBC's Charter in any way.¹³⁹ Thus the Company's Royal Charter remained un-

¹³³ Ellice spoke in defence of the NWC during a debate in Parliament over the disturbances in the fur trade following the Seven Oaks Massacre. See 'Canada-Red River Settlement', *House of Commons Hansard* (P.P. 1819, Vol. 40).

¹³⁴ Aaron Newell, 'North West and Hudson's Bay Companies', *The Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1924), pp. 199-204; and W. Stewart Wallace, *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 29.

¹³⁵ *Papers relating to the Red River Settlement* (P.P. 1819, Vol.XVIII.1), pp. 62-3.

¹³⁶ *Papers relating to the Red River Settlement* (P.P. 1819, Vol.XVIII.1), p. 63.

¹³⁷ *Papers relating to the Red River Settlement* (P.P. 1819, Vol.XVIII.1), p. 63.

¹³⁸ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, pp. 201-3; and Campbell, *The North West Company*, p. 308.

¹³⁹ *An Act for Regulating the Fur Trade, and establishing a Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction within certain Parts of North America* (P. P. 1821, C. LXVI). Ellice later reflected that he had been careful to ensure that the Company's Charter remained intact. See *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), p. 324.

ratified by the British Parliament.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, the Charter and the 1821 Act shows the multifaceted way in which the British state administered the empire, for the Company's Charter remained a royal prerogative, while Parliament authorised the use of an exclusive trading license, and the Privy Council possessed the power to choose whom to grant such a license.¹⁴¹ This coexistence of multiple forms of imperial administration does somewhat question Elizabeth Mancke's view that the chartering of corporations had become a Parliamentary prerogative by the early eighteenth century.¹⁴² The union between the HBC and NWC was outlined in the Deed of Covenant that was agreed at Hudson's Bay House on 26 March 1821, and was later formally signed by the respective parties on 5 December that same year.¹⁴³ The Deed paved the way for the Act of Parliament that came into effect on 5 November 1821.¹⁴⁴ Ellice, of course, had his own political considerations and commercial interests at heart during discussions with the HBC, as the NWC was heavily indebted to him.¹⁴⁵ In light of Ellice's ulterior motives and the disruption caused to the NWC by the Earl of Selkirk, it is not an over-exaggeration to suggest that the Montreal fur trade had been subject to a metropolitan takeover.

Outside of Canadian historiography, the union between the NWC and HBC is either overlooked or has been viewed as purely an aspect of business history. Yet, on the margins of Empire in North America where fur-trading posts were the only real claim to territory, the prospects of the NWC held great significance for the future of the entire continent. In essence, the NWC held a claim to hundreds of thousands of acres, and this influence only remained British so long as the Company remained centred in the British Empire. Astor would have no doubt jumped at the opportunity to merge the AFC with the NWC had an offer been forthcoming and such an outcome would have sparked a major diplomatic incident.¹⁴⁶ Only the Montreal merchants distrust of Astor and their staunch

¹⁴⁰ A number of historians have stated that Parliament ratified the Company's Charter in the 1821 Act but this is not the case. For instance, see Mancke, 'Chartered Enterprises', p. 252.

¹⁴¹ In his evidence to the 1857 Parliamentary Committee into the affairs of the HBC, Ellice was very clear that the Company did not have to apply to Parliament for anything as the power to grant the Company an exclusive license to regions outside of its Charter rested with the Crown. See *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), p. 347.

¹⁴² Mancke, 'Chartered Enterprises', p. 240.

¹⁴³ HBCA, A.1/52, *London Minute Book*, 1818-21, fos. 103-5; and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 308.

¹⁴⁴ *An Act for Regulating the Fur Trade, and establishing a Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction within certain Parts of North America* (P. P. 1821, C. LXVI); and Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 308.

¹⁴⁵ Indeed, Ellice initially stated to the 1857 Parliamentary Committee that he formulated the Act and the plan to merge the two companies 'not only at his [Bathurst's] request, but from obvious considerations of interest, having become under considerable engagements for one of the companies'. See *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), p. 324.

¹⁴⁶ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 293.

loyalty to the British crown — maintained despite the unwillingness of the British government to provide a Charter to the NWC in reward for their contribution to the expansion of British influence — prevented an alternative scenario of an Astor-NWC pact.¹⁴⁷ The NWC, itself born from the exodus of British Loyalists from the United States, and its union with the HBC acted to preserve British influence over vast swathes of territory that were vulnerable to American and Russian expansion, and served to maintain British political stability by avoiding yet another quarrel with the American republic. There were clear political motivations behind the union but as Marjorie Campbell argues, the agreement ultimately came about because the cooperative spirit required by the NWC's business model was compromised by internal division, which acted to weaken the bargaining position of the Company's agents.¹⁴⁸ This discord was a partial consequence of the difficulties brought about by the War of 1812 and Selkirk's colony, which led to accusations that the NWC's proprietors had not done enough to reconcile with the HBC. Internal disputes in the Montreal trade were, therefore, paramount over geographic factors.

Although it did not cause the disunity in the NWC, access to credit was another key reason for the NWC's capitulation. The NWC's finances were in disarray after the capture of Fort William but the HBC was also in an unenviable position; the London Company owed over £100,000 to the Bank of England by 1821.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, William McGillivray bemoaned his brother's failure to capitalise on this circumstance.¹⁵⁰ Even so, there were two central financial differences between the two companies that allowed the HBC greater flexibility. First, while both concerns could acquire credit from fellow proprietors the HBC had superior access to metropolitan finance, especially the Bank of England. In connection to this was the asset that the HBC could offer as security on the debt owed to the Bank: the Company's Charter.¹⁵¹ For the entire eighteenth century the Company's Charter remained un-ratified by the British Parliament, but the Royal Charter was deemed

¹⁴⁷ The Canada merchants involved in the fur trade were also deeply dissatisfied at the terms negotiated with the United States in the Treaty of Paris (1783) and Jay's Treaty (1794). As officials from Britain and the United States negotiated the Treaty of Ghent (1814), Inglis, Ellice and McTavish, Fraser sent a petition to Bathurst 'expressing their anxious hope that Reparation may be obtained by His Majesty's Ministers for the errors committed in the Treaties of 1783 and 1796 then solely occasioned by ignorance of the Rights and Interests of the Indians and your Memorialists'. See British Library, Add MS 38257, 'Inglis, Ellice & Co. to Lord Bathurst', *Liverpool Papers*, 17 May 1814, especially fo. 279.

¹⁴⁸ See Campbell, *The North West Company*, pp. 266-9.

¹⁴⁹ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 293.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66, 248.

an acceptable form of collateral for the Bank of England. Therefore, even though the HBC was significantly indebted, it is questionable that this would have significantly impeded the HBC's bargaining position had Simon McGillivray managed to 'push' this factor in the deliberations. While lack of credit did not lay the grounds for division within the NWC, it inhibited the Company's agents from envisioning a situation in which they could continue without the dissident winterers. Second, Ellice, a long-standing ally and powerful potential creditor, had his own motives for pushing a union between the two companies. Indeed, the merger was not forced onto the two companies by the British legislature as is often claimed, but was a master plan orchestrated by Ellice with the support of Bathurst.

Disunity and lack of credit thus undermined the NWC's hand and left it open to Ellice's manipulation but this leads on to the question as to how it was possible for the HBC to be allowed a monopoly of the fur trade at a time when there was considerable popular opposition to trade monopolies within Britain. Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, the exclusive privileges of chartered corporations were regularly subject to campaigns that sought their alteration or their outright withdrawal. In 1690, the HBC's attempt to gain parliamentary approval for its Charter was thwarted by the protestations of the Feltmakers' Company in London and by interested parties in New England and New York.¹⁵² As a result of these grievances, Parliament only approved the HBC's Charter for a mere seven years. Confronted by a deluge of opposition while attempting to prolong parliamentary ratification, the Company allowed the approval to expire in 1698 and hereafter relied solely upon Royal prerogative.¹⁵³ As Glyndwr Williams has shown, the HBC's response to this setback was to defend itself by shrouding its operations in secrecy for almost half a century.¹⁵⁴ The Company did not publish accounts of its explorations, cartographic material, or names of shareholders, kept copies of the Company's Charter strictly within the London Executive Committee, and never floated its shares on the open market during this period.¹⁵⁵ At a time when the EIC, Royal African Company, Levant Company, and South Sea Company were targeted by anti-monopoly proponents, the HBC remained conspicuously devoid of criticism until the 1740s.¹⁵⁶ Extreme secrecy, however, ultimately became the catalyst for an attack on the

¹⁵² Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 1, pp. 266-9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 361-4.

¹⁵⁴ See Williams, 'Critics', pp. 149-71.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Company. The campaign stemmed from the agitations of Arthur Dobbs, the Surveyor-General of Ireland, who had convinced the Admiralty to send an expedition to find the Northwest Passage in 1741.¹⁵⁷ After the failure of the voyage, Dobbs condemned the HBC's lack of assistance in the endeavour and succeeded in instigating an official inquiry into the handling of the expedition. Dobbs used the inquiry to accuse the HBC of making enormous profits and by deliberately limiting the fur trade for its own benefit.¹⁵⁸ With the support of merchants in Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, and London, Dobbs formed a North West Committee in 1747 that advocated a free trade to Hudson's Bay by emphasising that such was the right of all Englishmen.¹⁵⁹

To meet the mounting challenge, the HBC bypassed the inquiry and focused on directly lobbying each MP by issuing each member a pamphlet that exposed the vast exaggerations that critics had made of the Company's profits and prospects for trade expansion.¹⁶⁰ This strategy proved remarkably effective in light of the considerable respectability that the Company had built within the City of London, principally derived from the Company's financial prudence.¹⁶¹ In 1749, the Company successfully defeated the motion to have its Charter revoked by a majority of two to one, as the House rallied behind the defence that a chartered company was the most effective way in which to finance the necessary fortifications in Hudson's Bay, rather than burdening the public coffers with this expense.¹⁶² The HBC was not the only chartered company that was compelled to stave off a mid-century assault on its exclusive privileges. In 1750 the Royal African Company was dissolved and three years later the Charter of the Levant Company was revised.¹⁶³ These mid-century campaigns, however, reflected a shift towards more co-ordinated efforts against chartered monopolies in British overseas trade. Indeed, Williams has shown that many of the participants in the campaign against the Royal African Company were also part of the campaign against the HBC. John Hardman, a Liverpool merchant, was one of the leading figures of the Royal African Company campaign and became a member of Dobbs' North West Committee, as did many others

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 161. Also see Morgan Vanek, 'The Politics of the Weather: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Dobbs Affair', *The Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2015), pp. 395-411.

¹⁶¹ Williams, 'Critics', p. 162.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 164.

whom were active in the slave trade.¹⁶⁴ Anti-monopoly campaigns were not only beginning to be linked to one other but were increasingly co-ordinated by provincial mercantile interests, especially those from Liverpool, Bristol, and Glasgow.

In the 1812 debate over the EIC's Charter, provincial merchants and manufacturers succeeded in opening up the India trade. Compared to the mid-eighteenth campaigns, the provincial involvement in 1812 was more organised and drew upon a far wider spectrum of support. Liverpool once again led the campaign but the deputation that was sent to London comprised additional representatives from Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Dudley, Glasgow, Greenock, Hull, Manchester, Newcastle, Plymouth, and Sheffield.¹⁶⁵ Anthony Webster has argued that while the provincial campaign pushed George Rose, the Vice President of the Board of Trade into action, the EIC's monopoly was curtailed in an effort to maintain domestic stability, as an open India trade was perceived by the British government as a solution to inflationary pressures that were partly brought about by the disruption of the supply of raw materials from the United States.¹⁶⁶ More recently, however, Yukihiisa Kumagai has maintained that provincial merchants and manufacturers played a more crucial role in the opening of the India trade than Webster originally thought.¹⁶⁷

Despite the highly effective campaign launched against the EIC in 1811-3, the HBC once again remained beyond the anti-monopolists' gaze. Lessons had been learned from Dobbs' campaign. In addition to maintaining the Company's financial competency, the HBC Committee had recognised the benefits of publishing information about the natural environment of Hudson's Bay. This practice allowed the Company to appear as a patron of the Enlightenment, which was further supported by the Company's blossoming relationship with the Royal Society that was largely brokered by Samuel Wegg, a member of the Committee from 1760 and Governor between 1782 and 1799.¹⁶⁸ By the end of the eighteenth century, the HBC had thus neutralised the most damaging criticism that had propelled Dobbs' attempt to end the Company's Charter. Adam Smith's favourable portrayal of the Company's management and his deduction that Dobbs' claims about the Company's excessive profits had been greatly overstated no doubt further assisted the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁶⁵ Tyne and Wear Archives, MD/NC/49, *East India Trade Special Committee*, 1812.

¹⁶⁶ See Anthony Webster, 'The Political Economy of Trade Liberalization: The East India Company Charter Act of 1813', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (1990), pp. 404-19.

¹⁶⁷ For instance, see Kumagai Yukihiisa, *Breaking into the Monopoly: Provincial Merchants and Manufacturers' Campaigns for Access to the Asian Market, 1790-1833* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹⁶⁸ Williams, 'Critics', pp. 167-71.

Company's reputation.¹⁶⁹ As late as 1789, however, there were still those who contemplated the opening of the trade to Hudson's Bay. In that year, a treatise entitled 'Considerations Respecting a Free Trade to Hudson's Bay' was sent to William Pitt the Younger, which both criticised the conduct of the HBC and claimed that it was absurd that many of the Company's furs were transported to China by way of the overland route through Russia.¹⁷⁰

The continuance of the HBC's Charter was also enabled by the absence of any requirement to petition Parliament at regular intervals for a renewal of the Company's privileges and the fact that the Company did not require financial assistance from the government. Yet, it was also because the NWC failed to tap into popular anti-monopoly sentiment within Britain. The NWC were 'free traders' and yet they did not attempt to attach themselves to the buoyant and highly successful campaign that had played a significant part in ending the EIC's monopoly of trade in the Indian Ocean in 1813. Considering that the NWC operated a more substantial trade than the HBC and had greatly surpassed its rival's achievements in exploration, the Montreal traders certainly had the ammunition with which to launch a devastating critique of the London Company. The Canada merchants, however, never fully committed themselves to ending the Company's monopoly, and instead tried to lease transit rights through Hudson's Bay, gain control of the chartered company by purchasing sufficient stock, and by even attempting to acquire a Charter of their own. These reasons help to explain why the HBC retained its Charter but they cannot explain how the Company was granted a *de facto* monopoly of the fur trade in 1821. As the trading arm of the EIC was dismembered and the Company completed its metamorphosis from trader to sovereign, the HBC acquired a merchant kingdom of ice and snow that stretched from Hudson's Bay to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and in which it claimed sovereignty over thousands of Aboriginal peoples. The strengthening of a chartered company at a time of growing opposition to such institutions requires explanation.

Peter Cain and Antony Hopkins 'gentlemanly capitalist' thesis provides such an explanation.¹⁷¹ The central premise of Cain and Hopkins' hypothesis is that rich and

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, pp. 332-3.

¹⁷⁰ British Library, Add MS 59233, 'Considerations Respecting a Free Trade to Hudson's Bay', *Dropmore Papers*, c.1789.

¹⁷¹ See P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (1986), pp. 501-25. Also see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015*, Third Edition (London: Routledge, 2016).

influential merchants, bankers, insurers, and shipping magnates within the City of London were granted access to ruling circles so that the huge resources of the financial elite could be harnessed to fund the defence of the Hanoverian dynasty and to help the aristocracy modernise their agricultural assets. Trade and finance were considered ‘gentlemanly’ occupations as they enabled a similar lifestyle to that of the landed interest.¹⁷² Overseas markets were the forte of the gentlemanly capitalist and so they used their connections to elite circles to guide and shape British imperial policy. When the HBC-NWC union is considered in relation to this concept, Ellice emerges as the archetypal gentlemanly capitalist through his guiding of imperial policy to suit his own commercial interests. Bathurst’s receptiveness to Ellice’s scheme provides a good example of the government formulating imperial policy with cues from the gentlemanly capitalist group. Even the HBC’s survival during the Dobbs’ Affair could be considered a manifestation of gentlemanly capitalism in light of the crucial role played by the Company’s financial respectability within the City of London.

Gentlemanly capitalism provides a useful device with which to explain how the HBC was, in effect, granted a monopoly of the British fur trade in 1821 but the concept is not without its flaws. Webster has noted that the thesis works better when applied after the mid-nineteenth century, as before this time ‘the City’ was subject to major disturbances that were brought about by the French Wars and the social implications of industrialisation.¹⁷³ Instability sowed division amongst metropolitan merchants and financiers, as well as with overseas associates, as is evident in the 1813 EIC Charter debate and the abortive attempt to establish a London-based joint stock central bank for India in 1833-7.¹⁷⁴ Cain and Hopkins have also been criticised for their portrayal of links between industry and finance. Rather than their depiction of distant and side-lined industrialists, it has been argued that the relationship between industry and finance was a more cooperative and complementary one.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Huw Bowen has revealed that the

¹⁷² Cain and Hopkins, ‘The Old Colonial System’, especially pp. 505-8.

¹⁷³ Anthony Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 160-1.

¹⁷⁴ See Webster, ‘Political Economy of Trade Liberalization’, pp. 404-19; and Anthony Webster, ‘The Strategies and Limits of Gentlemanly Capitalism: The London East India Agency Houses, Provincial Commercial Interests, and the Evolution of British Economic Policy in South and South East Asia 1800-50’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (2006), pp. 743-64.

¹⁷⁵ Dauntton, M. J., ‘“Gentlemanly Capitalism” and British Industry 1820-1914’, *Past and Present*, No. 122 (1989), pp. 119-58; Webster, *Rise of the British Empire*, pp. 157-8; and Anthony Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics, 1790-1860* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), especially pp. 154-5, 162.

EIC, one of the hives of gentlemanly capitalism, fostered connections with provincial manufacturers in order to source profitable export commodities.¹⁷⁶

The conversion of gentlemanly capitalists to the mantra of ‘free trade’ is viewed by Cain and Hopkins as a central reason for Britain’s adoption of laissez-faire economics from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, not least because they were the main beneficiaries of trade liberalisation.¹⁷⁷ Britain’s transition from mercantilism to free trade was not a smooth process however. In fact, despite the rise of free trade ideology from the late eighteenth century onwards, it was not until the 1840s that Britain adopted liberal trade policies following the Repeal of the Corn Laws (1846) and Navigation Acts (1849).¹⁷⁸ In 1821, therefore, Britain remained a highly protectionist nation; the liberalisation of the India and China trades in 1813 and 1833 respectively were more to do with the exceptional situation of the EIC rather than symbolising a notable slide towards free trade policies.¹⁷⁹ As the extension of the HBC’s Charter shows, the mercantilist system was very much alive and well in 1821. The HBC and the fur trade remained a bastion of mercantilism even as ‘Free Trade’ matured into a quasi-religion of Victorian Britain.¹⁸⁰ It was not until 1870 in the Deed of Surrender that the Company relinquished the rights encapsulated within its Charter to the British crown, which was in turn handed to the fledging Dominion of Canada.

There is also the question of why monopoly was deemed the appropriate solution to the disturbances in the fur trade. When asked whether the HBC ought to have a monopoly of the fur trade by the 1857 Parliamentary Committee, Ellice responded:

If you were to allow competition to take place again in the trade of the north west territories, the competition might last eight or ten years, and the trade would be utterly destroyed; and the Indians would be reduced to a state of want and starvation of which one can give no description.¹⁸¹

Ellice thus concluded that the peace and stability that the fur trade brought to British North America was only maintained so long as a single company had a monopoly of the fur trade. Indeed, from 1821 through to the early 1840s, the HBC introduced a series of

¹⁷⁶ H. V. Bowen, ‘Sinews of Trade and Empire: The Supply of Commodity Exports to the East India Company during the Late Eighteenth Century’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2002), pp. 466-86.

¹⁷⁷ See P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, ‘The Political Economy of British Overseas Expansion, 1750-1914’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (1980), pp. 463-90; and Webster, *Rise of the British Empire*, p. 151.

¹⁷⁸ Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, pp. 2, 5.

¹⁷⁹ Cain and Hopkins, ‘The Old Colonial System’, p. 522.

¹⁸⁰ See Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*.

¹⁸¹ *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson’s Bay Company* (P. P. 1857, Vol. XV.1), p. 342.

conservation measures in an effort to restore the beaver population.¹⁸² As Sheilagh Ogilvie has argued, the central reason why medieval and early-modern European states granted exclusive commercial rights and privileges to merchant guilds and chartered companies was because these organisations solved particular problems encountered by rulers.¹⁸³ This hypothesis holds true in the case of the HBC. Further privileges were granted to the HBC in 1821 because the Company was viewed as the most effective means through which to regulate the fur trade.

VI. Conclusion

The view from the London Customs' House has largely been neglected by historians of the fur trade, despite the usefulness of the quantitative data that is contained within the trade records. This analysis of the customs' ledgers has revealed the distinctive attributes of key fur-trading regions, such as the scale and diversity of the Montreal fur trade, the predominance of the Anglo-American deer trade, and the modest yet stable beaver and marten trade of the HBC. The study has also shown the strength of an integrated approach to Britain's fur trade, a methodology that provides an authoritative explanation for the decline of the Montreal fur trade and the HBC-NWC union in 1821. The merger is made all the more curious by the fact that the fur trade of Montreal was a more substantial trade than that of the HBC and remained so even after the considerable disturbances to the NWC's operations. This finding yet again shows the importance of developments across the North-Atlantic World as it emerges that the NWC was, in many ways, as much the unfortunate victim of London's 'gentlemanly capitalists' as it was the War of 1812 or internal power struggles. Out-manoeuvred by metropolitan forces, the 'free' Montreal traders capitulated to the orthodox mercantilist philosophy that was embodied in the persistence of the HBC. As Washington Irving, American poet and author, later noted in 1836, 'the feudal state of Fort William is at an end... the lords of the lakes and forests have passed away; and the hospitable magnates of Montreal—where are they!'.¹⁸⁴ In their

¹⁸² These efforts included restrictions on the use of traps, maximum quotas of beaver, and an emphasis on other types of fur. See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 469-76, 494-6.

¹⁸³ Sheilagh Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁸⁴ Washington Irving, *Astoria, or, Anecdotes of an Enterprize Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, New Edition edited by Richard Dilworth Rust (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 13.

place stood ‘the little emperor’ George Simpson, under the watchful eye of Fenchurch Street’s ‘gentlemanly capitalists’.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Stephen R. Bown, *Merchant Kings: When Companies Ruled the World 1600-1900* (London: Conway, 2010), pp. 195-37; and Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, p. 475.

The Supply of Commodity Exports to the Hudson's Bay Company

The commodities demanded by Aboriginal peoples in exchange for furs were wide-ranging and had to be adapted to the tastes of these disparate communities. This meant that the collection of market information on the items that were favoured by Aboriginal peoples was essential to the successful prosecution of the trade and constituted a form of 'insider knowledge' that was not easily accessible to outsiders. Understanding and satisfying the desires of Aboriginal consumers further increased the highly specialised nature of the fur trade and raised barriers to new entrants into the trade. Extant studies of the fur trade have shed light on the process of exchange between western fur traders and Aboriginal communities in North America, and have considered in some depth the political and cultural impact of the fur trade on the everyday lives of Aboriginal peoples. Analyses of archaeological sites, explorer journals, and trading ledgers have established the extensive range of commodities demanded by Aboriginal communities. Regional and inter-tribal disparities in material culture have been explored, as have the specific meanings that were attached to a number of the imported commodities.¹ Further research would add much to these explorations but there is one notable gap in our understanding of the barter economy of the fur trade: the specific origin of the commodities that western traders used in their exchanges with Aboriginal peoples.²

¹ For instance see: (on glass beads) Shepard Krech, 'The Early Fur Trade in the Northwestern Subarctic: The Kutchin and the Trade in Beads', in Bruce G. Trigger, Toby Morantz, and Louise Dechene, eds., *Le Castor Fait Tout: Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1987), pp. 236-77; and (on the inferred meanings attached to pipe tomahawks and silver ornaments) Wilcomb E. Washburn, 'Symbol, Utility, and Aesthetics in the Indian Fur Trade', in Minnesota Historical Society, *Aspects of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967), pp. 50-4.

² There are two commodities whose origins of manufacture have been considered in some depth: silver ornaments and textiles (namely blankets). For silver see: Ramsay Traquair, 'Montreal and the Indian Trade Silver', *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1938), pp. 1-8. For textiles see: Cory Willmott, 'From Stoud to Strouds: The Hidden History of a British Fur Trade Textile', *Textile History*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2005), pp. 196-243.

This chapter addresses this gap through a detailed analysis of the commodity exports of the HBC between 1783 and 1821, a study that reveals the lengths to which the Company had to go in order to satisfy the needs and desires of their Aboriginal customers. More significantly, such an analysis helps us to understand the role of the HBC in the British domestic economy during a period punctuated by the severe dislocation in international markets as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, and one in which there was a very significant growth in the volume of British overseas trade. Recent studies have shown that the EIC played a more significant role in stimulating the metropolitan and wider British economy than historians had previously thought.³ In particular, H. V. Bowen has argued that the EIC's export trade supported a range of traditional industries which faltered in the late eighteenth century, namely the copper mines of Cornwall and South Wales, and the West Country and East Anglian textile industries.⁴ While the contribution of the EIC to the domestic economy has been reassessed, the influence of other 'great' chartered companies on the British economy in the early modern period remains largely unknown. While it was a smaller concern than the EIC, the HBC also made regular purchases of commodities for trade, as well as for the provision of its overseas servants. What was the scale and scope of these purchases? From where and from whom did the HBC purchase its commodities? Did the HBC forge links with provincial industries that were comparable to those established by the EIC?

In order to answer these questions and uncover the impact of the HBC on the British economy the chapter draws upon trading ledgers contained within the archives of the HBC. These records list the purchase of commodities and services from an extensive number and range of tradespeople.⁵ Analysis of the accounts is supplemented by evidence from the Company's minute books, correspondence, and British trade directories. These primary sources show that the HBC provided a regular and reliable source of income to a large number and wide range of tradespeople, especially those in London. The Company's influence also extended beyond the metropolis and into provincial regions. Above all, it appears that British merchants and manufacturers were content with the

³ In particular, see Maxine Berg, 'From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2002), pp. 1-30; Maxine Berg, 'In Pursuit of Luxury: Global Origins of British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, No. 182 (2004), pp. 85-142; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Bowen, 'Sinews', pp. 466-86; and Bowen, *Business of Empire*.

⁴ Bowen, 'Sinews', pp. 466-86.

⁵ See HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported, 1778-1823*.

organisation of the British fur trade as there is no evidence that they sought to attack the HBC's Charter during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, or prevent its merger with the NWC in 1821. This lack of opposition helped the HBC to maintain its Charter and reduced the political difficulties involved in granting the Company a *de facto* monopoly of the fur trade. Indeed, provincial firms played a major role in the 1813 and 1833 campaigns against the renewal of the EIC's trading privileges and their absence in the case of the HBC reaffirms how important their contribution was to the expansion of 'free trade'.

The chapter is structured into three parts. The first establishes the scale of the Company's commodity export trade by comparing the real values listed in the Company's accounts with the official value of exports to Hudson's Bay as contained in the British customs' records. This analysis shows that the Company's commodity export trade roughly doubled over the period but that this growth was far from uniform. Second, the methodology that was used to categorise the purchases contained in the Company's ledgers, and the range of trading commodities purchased is explored alongside the ways in which Aboriginal peoples used these articles. It is revealed that the Company's purchases were predominately for consumer goods, especially textiles, alcohol, and tobacco. The third and final section analyses the relationships that the Company established with the suppliers of its trading commodities and uncovers over-arching trends in the duration and distribution of the Company's supply networks. It is shown that the Company provided regular, reliable custom to a wide range of tradespeople and that the majority of the Company's purchases of trading commodities was heavily focused on London, although the Company did support a number of provincial industries when it proved expedient to do so. While sources are scarce, it is also revealed that the London Houses which supplied the NWC also purchased a number of their trading commodities from the same suppliers as the HBC.

I. The Scale of Commodity Exports

The Company's account books suggest that between 1783 and 1821 the HBC's commodity export purchases averaged £30,899 each year.⁶ This figure was over 40 times smaller than the average £1.3 million annually exported by the EIC in 1795-9.⁷ The

⁶ HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823. This figure includes shipping costs.

⁷ Bowen, 'Sinews', p. 470.

British fur trade — whether it was the trade from Hudson’s Bay or Montreal — was, therefore, a minor market for British merchants and manufactures. The small scale of the fur trade, together with its limited potential for growth, was a key reason why there were no calls to reform the trade during this period. It should be reaffirmed, however, that British merchants and manufacturers had attempted to open the trade to Hudson’s Bay during the Dobb’s Affair of the mid-eighteenth century, so it was not the case that such groups did not care about their access to the fur trade.⁸ Rather, the British acquisition of Canada in 1763 brought a degree of trade liberalisation to the fur trade as it granted British merchants and manufacturers another way in which to access the trade. Furthermore, it was the ending of the EIC’s monopoly of the India and China trades that most captivated the British mercantile community at this time. The small scale of the fur trade, the fact there was competition between the Hudson’s Bay and Canadian fur trades, and the perceived riches to be gained from opening the India and China trades, largely explains why British merchants and manufacturers did not attempt to challenge the HBC’s Charter in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Despite the fact that the HBC’s trade was small and vastly over-shadowed by its counterpart on Leadenhall Street, the Company was well-integrated into the metropolitan economy and provided a wide number of tradespeople with a reliable and secure source of income. Figure 3.1 shows the HBC’s annual purchases of provisions, trading goods, and other services in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Considering the disruption that the French Revolutionary, Napoleonic, and 1812 Wars caused to international trade, the Company’s trade was remarkably stable; there were few years of depression. Only 1804 and 1811-2 stand out as years when significant decreases in the value of exported merchandise occurred since declines in 1817 and 1821 were in the midst of years that were marked by exceptional growth.⁹ Unlike in the War of American Independence, when a French naval expedition destroyed York and Churchill Factories, Hudson’s Bay was not subject to an armed confrontation during the post-1783 period.¹⁰ The remote location of Hudson’s Bay therefore explains why there was no considerable fall in the Company’s trade.

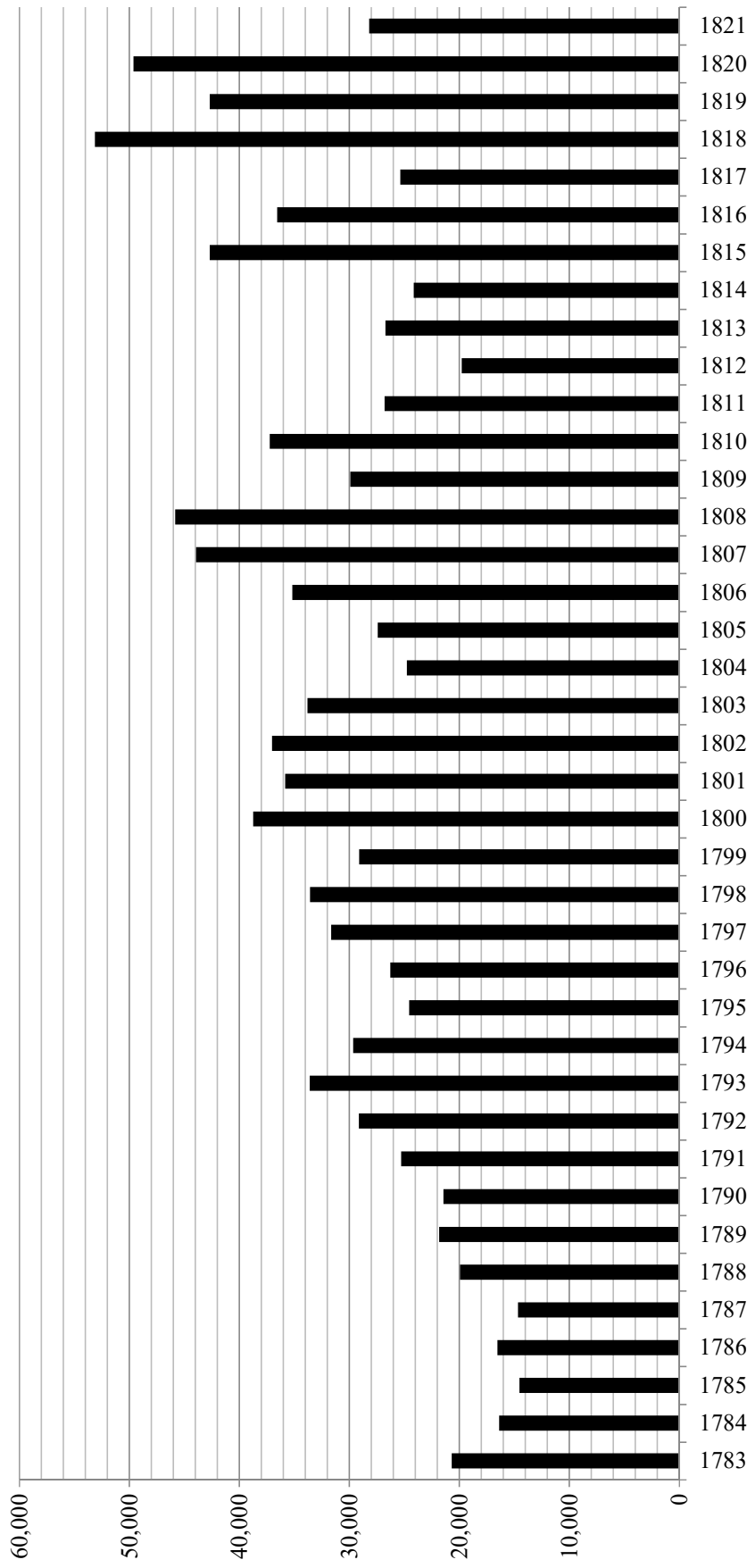
There are, however, a number of potential limitations of relying on conclusions drawn from the Company’s account books. The ledgers recorded the real value of the

⁸ Williams, ‘Critics’, p. 159.

⁹ See Figure 3.1.

¹⁰ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 84-7.

Figure 3.1. HBC's annual purchases of trading commodities, provisions, and services for export to Hudson's Bay, 1783-1821 (in £).



Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported, 1778-1823*.

purchased commodities and so cannot be used to provide an accurate view of how the scale of the Company's trade changed over time. Rapid inflation in the Napoleonic War era means that apparently stable levels of purchases in the Company's records may actually represent a reduction in real terms. While the Company did not record volumes, analysis of the 'official value' of merchandise exported to Hudson's Bay, as recorded in the British customs' records, can be used to determine the impact of inflation on the Company's accounts. Unfortunately, the aggregate official values for Hudson's Bay in the 1780s and 1790s are incomplete. For instance, in 1783 exports of key commodities such as blankets, guns, and iron were not listed in the customs' ledgers, yet they were by 1821. Nonetheless, the official value of specific commodities that were routinely recorded in the custom's records can provide an indication as to the extent of the omissions.

Table 3.1 compares the percentage change in the HBC's average annual purchases of commodity exports with the percentage change in the average annual official value of exports to Hudson's Bay, in addition to, the percentage change in the official value of gunpowder and woollen long cloth exported (two commodities that were regularly listed in the customs' records). The Company's trade clearly expanded in 1788-92 but the customs' records greatly over-estimate this growth. The increase in the official value of gunpowder (79 per cent) and woollen long cloth (60 per cent) is closer to the Company's records (59 per cent) than the customs' figures (172 per cent).¹¹ The reason for this discrepancy is because new commodities were being added to the customs' ledgers so that they were becoming more accurate, although there would always be a degree of variation between the two sets of sources as — unlike the customs' ledgers — the Company's records include expenditure relating to 'shipping', packing, warehousing, docking, and lightering.¹² During the Napoleonic War period, the Company's trade evidently declined as the real values in the Company's records were largely stagnant.¹³ In addition, the customs' records are more accurate after 1800, and the aggregate value declined by 29 per cent in 1798-1802 and by a further 32 per cent in 1803-7.¹⁴ Despite the return to peace and the resultant fall in prices, it is apparent that the Company's trade almost doubled in 1818-21 as the Company's purchases increased by 40 per cent at the

¹¹ See Table 3.1.

¹² Shipping includes anchors, masts, oars, pitch, rope, ship builders, ship carvers, ship chandlers, ship glaziers and painters, and tar.

¹³ See Table 3.1.

¹⁴ See Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. HBC's average annual purchases of provisions, trading goods, and services for export to Hudson's Bay, and the average annual official value of exports from Britain to Hudson's Bay, 1783-1821 (in £).

	HBC's Purchases			Total Exports			Gunpowder			Woollen Long Cloth		
	Real Value (£)	Percentage Change (%)	Official Value (£)	Percentage Change (%)	Official Value (£)	Percentage Change (%)	Official Value (£)	Percentage Change (%)	Official Value (£)	Percentage Change (%)	Official Value (£)	Percentage Change (%)
1783-7	16,559		6,825		296		1,496					
1788-92	25,252	+59	18,551	+172	528	+79	2,387	+60				
1793-7	29,144	+11	37,416	+102	338	-36	N/A	N/A				
1798-1802	34,858	+20	26,460	-29	299	-12	2,484	N/A				
1803-7	33,016	-6	17,898	-32	338	+13	1,648	-34				
1808-12	31,910	-3	19,019	+6	433	+28	1,085	-34				
1813-7	31,095	-3	17,335	-9	484	+12	1,608	+48				
1818-21	43,411	+40	32,743	+89	921	+90	2,964	+84				

Notes: Woollen long cloth was not listed in the customs' records between 1793 and 1802. The customs' figures include 'British' and 'Foreign' merchandise.

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823; TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1812-21; TNA, CUST 10/4-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries*, 1809-21; and TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of Navigation, Commerce and Revenue*, 1783-1808.

end of period.¹⁵ The official values show that on average each year twice as much woollen long cloth was exported in 1818-21 (£2,964) than in 1783-7 (£1,496), and for the same period exports of gunpowder tripled.¹⁶ It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the Company's trade roughly doubled between 1783-7 and 1818-21, and that most of this increase occurred at the end of the period.

II. *The Range of Commodity Exports*

In order to examine the wide array of commodities that the Company exported to Hudson's Bay, the Company's transactions with tradespeople need to be categorised. This is a problematic process due to the diverse range of tradespeople involved and the various terminologies that were used to describe them, although there were a few instances where a specific commodity was listed rather than a tradesperson, such as in the case of kettles and powder horns. In total around 443 tradespeople are named in the Company's ledgers of 'merchandise exported' over the period of this study, and they consisted of a wide array of occupations.¹⁷ To circumvent these challenges and collate the numerous occupations into a more manageable form, this analysis has grouped the transactions into various categories. In the first instance, this was into three key groupings that focused on a commodity rather than an occupation: trading commodities, provisions, and services. The distinction between trading commodities and provisions was partially determined by the findings of previous studies of the trade between Aboriginal peoples and European fur traders, as well as the Company's own delineation of the two groupings that was present for the years 1799-1809, 1811-3, and 1821.¹⁸ 'Trading commodities' includes those items that were used for trade with Aboriginal peoples, although it should be noted that it is possible that the Company also included some items that were purchasable by the

¹⁵ See Table 3.1.

¹⁶ See Table 3.1.

¹⁷ The occupations included: anchor-smiths, armourers, baize factors, bead merchants, bell founders, biscuit makers, blanket makers, blockmakers, book sellers, box makers, braziers, brewers, butchers, button makers, cabinet makers, chart and map sellers, cheesemongers, chemists, chinamen, clothiers, coal merchants, comb makers, coopers, coppersmiths, cutlers, distillers, druggists, dyers, flour factors, garter and lace makers, grocers, gunpowder merchants, gunsmiths, haberdashers, hardwaremen, hat makers, Irish factors, ironmongers, lacemen, lead and shot merchants, linen drapers, mast makers, mealmen, oar makers, oilmen, opticians, pewterers, plumasiens (sellers of feathers), ribbon manufacturers, rope makers, rum brokers, sail makers, seed merchants, ship builders, shoemakers, slop sellers, stationers, tallow chandlers, timber merchants, tobacco-pipe makers, tobacconists, trunk makers, warehousemen, and wine merchants.

¹⁸ See for instance Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, especially pp. 69-105; and HBCA, A.25/4, *Merchandise Exported*, 1800-12, fo. 2.

Company's servants in Hudson's Bay within this category. 'Provisions' includes those commodities that were for the use of the Company's servants and 'services' consists of the necessary activities that were required for the export of commodities such as shipping, storage, and packing.¹⁹ These groupings necessarily have limitations. Alcohol and tobacco, two commodities that were of vital importance to the trade with Aboriginal peoples, were also purchased by the Company's servants from the Company's stocks. The Company's accounts always list tobacco as a trading commodity, but purchases of rum are noted as both a provision and a commodity for trade. For this study, tobacco, brandy, and rum have been classed as 'trading commodities' whereas other liquors, such as beer and wine have been categorised as provisions.

Figure 3.2 shows the Company's annual purchases of trading commodities, provisions, and services for export to Hudson's Bay. It is clear that most of the purchases were of trading commodities and that they increased substantially over the period, especially after 1814. Purchases of provisions rose notably between 1791 and 1810, decreasing thereafter until another surge in 1817-20.²⁰ Service costs exhibited a similar trend to that of provisions.²¹ The annual averages contained in Table 3.2 shed further light on the scale of the Company's export trade. On average each year, 55 per cent (£16,644) of the Company's export purchases were on trading commodities, 29 per cent (£8,743) on provisions, and 16 per cent (£4,735) on services.²² While looking in-depth at the provisions and services supplied to the Company would no doubt be useful, the remaining parts of this section focuses on the trading commodities purchased by the Company.

Table 3.3 breaks down the Company's purchases of trading commodities into 'consumer' and 'producer' goods. Consumer goods were those items that were for

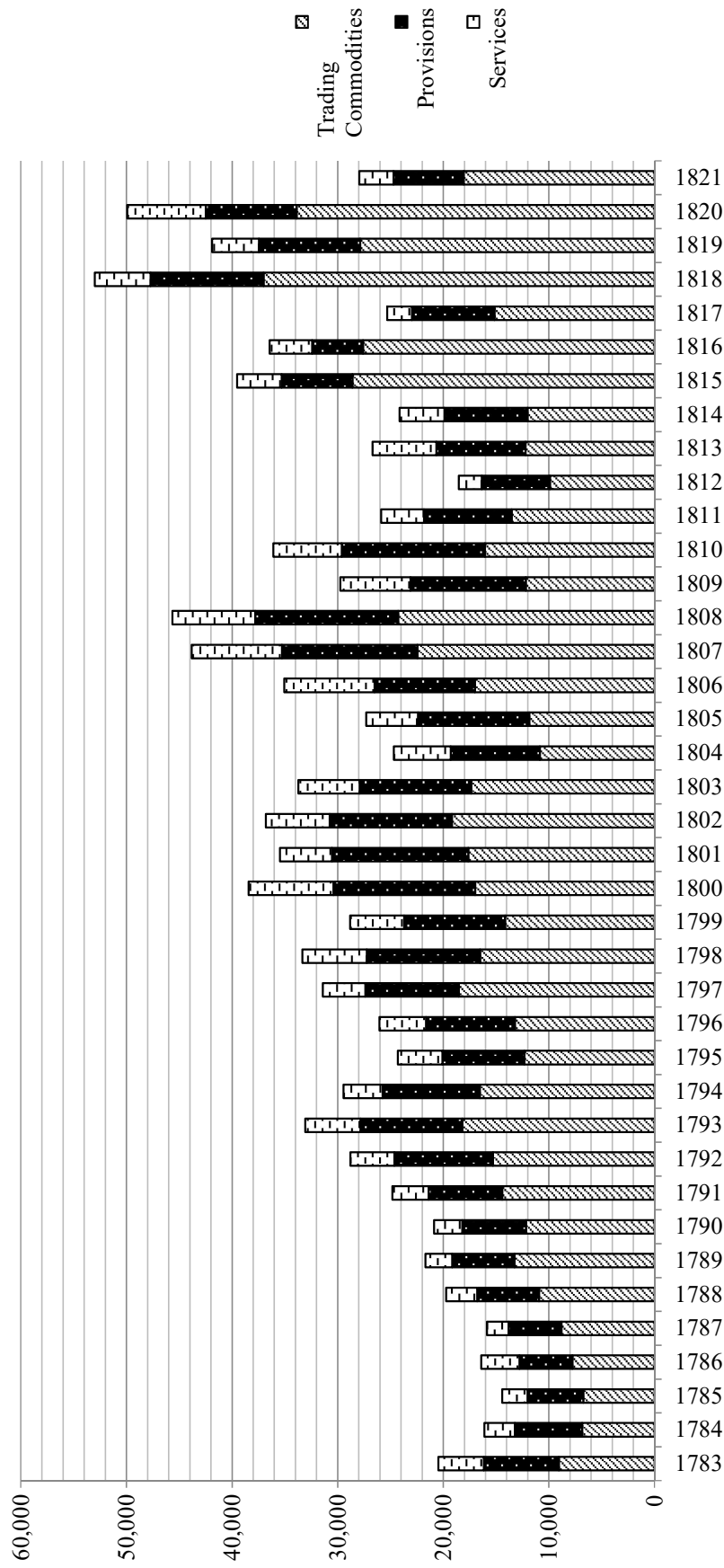
¹⁹ The service category has its limitations as roughly about one-eighth of the purchases from 'coopers' was listed as a trading commodity and the rest as provisions. Furthermore, purchases of empty rundlets, bottles, and kegs were generally listed as a trading commodity in the account books but analysis from the Company's minute books suggest that this distinction was not so clear cut. At a meeting at Hudson's Bay House on 19 January 1785 the Committee 'resolved that for the easier conveyance of provisions inland the Beef and Port be packed in Rundlets of 15 pieces each, and that twenty such Rundlets be provided'.¹⁹ Rundlets were purchased by Aboriginal peoples at the Company's posts to hold small quantities of alcohol to ease transportation but they were clearly also used by the Company to transport provisions. It was therefore deemed preferable that such items be placed in an altogether separate category. See HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 40. Another such instance is noted in the record of the Committee meeting held on 5 April 1786, during which it was resolved that 'Twelve Rundlets of Beef, nine of pork and thirty of flour be packed in London for Inland service at Albany and the same number of each for Moose to forward the conveyance of provisions to the most distant places'. See HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 80.

²⁰ See Figure 3.2.

²¹ See Figure 3.2.

²² See Table 3.2.

Figure 3.2. HBC's annual purchases of trading commodities, provisions, and services for export to Hudson's Bay, 1783-1821 (in £).



Notes: The size of each column slightly differs from those in Figure 3.1 because some miscellaneous articles were not included in the three categorisations. The total value of the discounted articles is £14,129.

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

Table 3.2. HBC's average annual purchases of trading commodities, provisions, and services for export to Hudson's Bay by type, 1783-1821 (in £).

	Trading Commodities	Percentage Change (%)	Provisions	Percentage Change (%)	Services	Percentage Change (%)
1783-7	7,850		5,762		3,038	
1788-92	13,212	+68	6,825	+18	3,144	+3
1793-7	15,767	+19	8,773	+29	4,316	+37
1798-1802	16,898	+7	11,635	+33	6,040	+40
1803-7	15,905	-6	10,378	-11	6,643	+10
1808-12	15,187	-5	10,554	+2	5,442	-18
1813-7	19,118	+26	7,135	-32	4,171	-23
1818-21	29,219	+53	8,882	+24	5,088	+22
Overall Average	16,644		8,743		4,735	

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

decorative, or recreational purposes. Producer goods were articles that were used for hunting, food preparation, and other work-related activities. As the table shows, the majority of the purchases were for consumer goods (71 per cent), while around 30 per cent of the purchases were for producer goods.²³ While purchases of producer goods roughly tripled from an annual average of £1,754 in 1783-7 to £5,689 in 1818-21, the exports of consumer goods more than quadrupled between 1783-7 (£3,696) and 1818-21 (£20,202).²⁴

By far the most significant export over the period was textiles and clothing. A total of £305,202 was spent on such articles, which accounts for 67 per cent of the consumer goods purchased for trade, and just over half (£155,519) of this was made up of cloth.²⁵ Included in the cloth category were purchases from clothiers, cloth factors, cloth drawers, setters, and dyers. While the Company's accounts do not list the specific fabrics that the Company purchased, the primary textile used in the fur trade was a coarse type of woollen broadcloth sometimes referred to as 'strouds'.²⁶ The Company largely purchased

²³ See Table 3.3.

²⁴ Calculated using the data in Tables 3.5 and 3.6 that shows the Company's purchases of the six most important consumer and producer goods.

²⁵ See Table 3.3.

²⁶ See Willmott, 'British Fur Trade Textile', pp. 196-243.

Table 3.3. Composition of the HBC's overall purchases of trading commodities, 1783-1821 (in £).

Consumer Goods	Total	Producer Goods	Total
<i>Metalware</i>		<i>Armaments</i>	
Total ^a	4,567 (1%)	Gunpowder	38,455 (39%)
<i>Textiles & Clothing</i>		Guns	40,605 (41%)
Blankets	61,824 (20%)	Lead & Shot	19,143 (19%)
Cloth ^b	155,519 (51%)	Other ^g	873 (1%)
Haberdashery ^c	10,833 (4%)	Total	99,076 (54%)
Slops	56,379 (18%)	<i>Metalware</i>	
Other ^d	20,647 (7%)	Iron ^h	33,894 (59%)
Total	305,202 (67%)	Kettles	13,152 (23%)
<i>Other Luxuries</i>		Knives & Hardware	10,465 (17%)
Alcohol ^e	78,066 (54%)	Total	57,511 (31%)
Glass Beads	6,393 (4%)	<i>Lines & Twine</i>	
Tobacco	44,989 (31%)	Total	28,221 (15%)
Other ^f	14,512 (10%)		
Total	143,960 (32%)		
Overall Total	184,808 (29%)		453,729 (71%)

Notes: The percentages included alongside each sub-category relate to the overall purchases of the respective category. The percentages stated in the category totals correlate to the overall total;

^a contains copper, cutlery, medals, pewter, silver, tin, and tinplates;

^b includes dyeing costs that total £25,730;

^c consists of buttons, crape, ribbons, and silk;

^d comprises flannel, hosiery, lace, linen, and silk handkerchiefs;

^e includes products of 'distillers', English brandy, and malt;

^f includes cards, combs, earthenware, feathers, glass, hats, leather straps, shoes, tobacco pipes, 'toys', trunks, and vermilion;

^g consists of gun flints, powder horns, and swords;

^h also includes transactions with 'braziers' (£3,418).

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

unfinished white woollen cloth that had to be dyed, the staple colours of which were dark blue and red but small amounts of emerald green, yellow, and light blue were also used.²⁷ These colours had significant spiritual meaning for many Aboriginal communities and so the intensity of the dye was a critical component in the types of textiles that they purchased.²⁸ Blankets accounted for a further 20 per cent (£61,824) of the textile and

²⁷ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 11; and Willmott, 'British Fur Trade Textile', pp. 223-4.

²⁸ Harold Tichenor, *The Collector's Guide to Point Blankets of the Hudson's Bay Company and Other Companies Trading in North America* (Bowen Island, BC: Cinetel Film Productions, 2002), p. 8.

clothing purchases.²⁹ That blankets came second to woollen cloth is perhaps surprising as the sub-arctic Cree, one of the Company's primary customers, supposedly preferred blankets to broadcloth.³⁰ These blankets were usually made out of wool and had one or more coloured stripes near each end.³¹ The Company began selling woollen blankets to Aboriginal peoples as early as 1682 but it was not until 1779 that the well-known 'point blanket' became a staple of the Company's trade.³² Unlike other woollen blankets, the point blanket had one to four short threads of wool yarn woven or sewn into the corner of the blanket, and these lines or 'points' were intended to identify the size and thus the value of the blanket.³³

The next most significant item in the textiles and clothing category was 'slops', which comprised 18 per cent (£56,379) of the textiles and clothing purchased.³⁴ Slops was a term used to refer to ready-made clothing, and included coats, lined and unlined jackets, breeches, trousers, shirts, frocks, and handkerchiefs.³⁵ The extent of the exports of slops is substantial and was rather unexpected. None of the detailed studies of the HBC's exchanges with Aboriginal peoples in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have suggested such significant use of ready-made clothing in the trade.³⁶ Cory Willmott has suggested that the NWC was, by the early eighteenth century, making ready-made garments for the trade from imported woollen textiles.³⁷ In his ambitious study of eighteenth-century dress across the Atlantic World, Robert DuPlessis found that in the 1720s and 1740s Aboriginal peoples supplied by a merchant in Pennsylvania and by French traders at Green Bay on the north-east edge of Lake Michigan increased the proportion of ready-made clothing that they traded.³⁸ A similar trend has been observed in the deer trade conducted by Creek peoples in Georgia, South Carolina, and East and West Florida, particularly the popularity of ready-made shirts amongst Creek men.³⁹ Many of these slops were made out of cotton fabrics, and so, while DuPlessis maintains that woollens remained the primary textile intended for Aboriginal peoples in North

²⁹ See Table. 3.3.

³⁰ Willmott, 'British Fur Trade Textile', p. 209.

³¹ Tichenor, *Point Blankets*, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 7.

³⁴ See Table 3.3.

³⁵ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fos. 26, 88, 106.

³⁶ There are no mentions of 'slops' as an article of exchange in the two principal studies of the HBC's fur trade. See Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea* and Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*.

³⁷ Willmott, 'British Fur Trade Textile', p. 205.

³⁸ DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, pp. 95-7, 115, 120.

³⁹ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, p. 125.

America, he argues that these communities at least partially participated in the eighteenth-century rise of cotton textiles across the Atlantic.⁴⁰ Aboriginal peoples did not, however, necessarily use these items of clothing in the same way as Europeans. For instance, while shirts were commonly worn as an undergarment in Europe, DuPlessis finds that Aboriginal peoples in North America generally wore them over their dress as they wanted them greasy and water-resistant.⁴¹ Similarly, not all European apparel found ready appeal within Aboriginal communities in the Americas; the HBC stopped offering breeches as an item of trade in the early eighteenth century on account of poor demand, and several other indigenous groups shared this dislike of breeches.⁴² Of the remaining items in the textiles and clothing category, haberdashery made up 4 per cent (£10,833) of the purchases and included items such as buttons, crape, and ribbons, and the remaining 7 per cent (£20,647) consisted of items such as flannel, hosiery, lace, linen, and silk handkerchiefs.⁴³

In his seminal study *Indians and the Fur Trade* (1974), Arthur Ray noted how the depletion of game resources and fur-bearing animals in the eastern portions of Hudson's Bay forced many Aboriginal groups to increasingly turn to the use of European clothing materials.⁴⁴ This shift was partly out of economic necessity but the comfort and practicalities of quick-drying cotton over leather assisted the proliferation of European textiles.⁴⁵ In addition, the bright colours of these imported textiles became very popular with Aboriginal peoples.⁴⁶ The transition occurred most rapidly in the northeast where the weather was cooler and wetter than the parkland-grassland area to the southwest. The 'home guard Cree' and other Aboriginal peoples who resided in close proximity to the Company's posts and acted as a highly skilled form of labour for the acquisition of country provisions, were one such group that quickly became reliant on European textiles for their clothing as large game animals disappeared. In areas that were less depleted, blankets were more in demand than woollen cloth. The blankets were versatile items that could be placed over other garments during the winter for added warmth or could easily be repurposed into socks and mitten linings.⁴⁷ Woollen cloth and haberdashery were also

⁴⁰ DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, p. 99.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

⁴³ See Table 3.3.

⁴⁴ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, especially pp. 79-81.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴⁶ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, p. 123.

⁴⁷ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 81.

commonly used by the Company's tailors in Hudson's Bay to make the trading coats that were gifted to Aboriginal chieftains.

Other key items of trade included alcohol, tobacco, glass beads, and metallic ornaments. Alcohol made up 17 per cent (£78,066) of the overall exports of consumer goods and surpassed the total value of metalware purchased (Table 3.3).⁴⁸ Overall, 12 per cent of the purchases contained in the Company's accounts were for brandy, rum, or the produce of 'distillers'. This amount is not, however, as high as might be expected. Alcohol was supposedly liberally supplied to Aboriginal communities during the intense competition between the HBC and NWC in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹ This low share of the Company's exports to Hudson's Bay may indicate that the Company did not substantially increase the volumes of alcohol sent to the Bay. This would not be entirely without precedent, as Carlos and Lewis have shown through their use of the Company's post account books at York Factory, alcohol did not comprise a large proportion of the Company's trade in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ They found that in 1720 only 5 per cent of the goods purchased by Aboriginal visitors to York Factory were for alcohol.⁵¹ There was an upward trend over the period however. In 1760, 20 per cent of the purchases were for alcohol, but from this peak the share of alcohol declined to 13 per cent in 1770.⁵² It should be reaffirmed, however, that the way alcohol was listed in the Company's ledgers of 'merchandise exported' is particularly problematic. Some of the brandy, malt, rum, and products of distillers exported to Hudson's Bay would have been purchased by the Company's servants and added to their account with the Company. Even with this complication it is improbable that alcohol made up a greater part of the Company's trade than it had in 1760. Indeed, if the £23,123 worth of beer and wine exports are added to that spent on brandy, distillers, malt, and rum, the total amount would only make up 15 per cent (£101,000) of the new calculated purchases of trading commodities (£662,000).⁵³

Most intriguing is that there were no purchases described as brandy or from a distiller after 1810. In addition, brandy is not mentioned in the London minute books after this date. The last entry to mention brandy was on 18 April 1810 when R. Dowding &

⁴⁸ See Table 3.3.

⁴⁹ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp. 85-6, 155, 214.

⁵⁰ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 89-94.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3, 92.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3, 92.

⁵³ Using data from Tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Co. were ordered to ‘supply this Company with puncheons instead of Brandy Pipes for the English spirits exported this year to the Bay’.⁵⁴ The Company did not cease to offer alcohol as an item of exchange but this final entry strongly suggests that the Company changed the type of alcohol that it made available for trade in Hudson’s Bay. Closer inspection of the accounts suggests that there was more rum purchased after 1810, and thus rum may have replaced brandy as the principal liquor supplied for the Company’s trade. The purchases of rum or those from rum brokers prior to this year were generally small. John Macfarlane & Co. provided £562 of rum in 1786 and J. & C. Cowell supplied £34 worth that same year. Coe & Co. supplied £3,729 worth of rum in 1794-1800 and a further £3,177 was provided by James Man & Son in 1801-10. If all of the entries that included rum in the 27 years before 1810 are totalled, the value comes to £9,769. Purchases from Graham, Simpson & Co. alone totalled £15,783 in the seven years between 1810-6, and an additional £10,043 was purchased from the rum merchants Webster, Simpson & Co. in 1817-21. Therefore, in the 12 years after 1809, twice the value of rum was supplied to the Company as had been in last 27 years.

It appears, therefore, that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Company abandoned its long-established practice of supplying brandy for the trade. Indeed the use of ‘English brandy’, which appears to have been a raw sort of gin, was originally adopted in order to appease Aboriginal consumers who had become accustomed to French brandy during the hegemony of New France, and the supply of the latter was frequently disrupted by war.⁵⁵ English brandy was apparently not especially popular with Aboriginal communities and shipments of French brandy were, in fact, still made in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁶ It is probable that the worst years of trade dislocation during the Napoleonic Wars (1808-14) propelled the Company to search for alternatives. Rum clearly was that alternative as subsequent entries in the Company’s minutes are littered with proposals and discussions about whether to purchase Jamaica, Leeward Island, or Tobago rum.⁵⁷ This shift was no doubt influenced by the appointment

⁵⁴ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 121.

⁵⁵ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 1*, pp. 283, 310-1, 544-5.

⁵⁶ For instance, on 15 April 1807 it was ‘resolved that French Brandy be sent to the Factories the ensuing season being cheaper than Jamaica Rum by six pence per gallon’. Similarly, on 27 April 1808 the Committee agreed with Messers James Mann & Sons proposals to supply the Company with French Brandy at 4/9 per gallon. HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fos. 37, 64. On ‘English brandy’ see Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 1*, p. 545.

⁵⁷ See entries on 15 May 1811, 4 May 1814, and 27 March 1816 in: HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-1814, fos. 30, 110; and HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 48.

of Andrew Wedderburn Colville to the HBC Committee on 17 January 1810. Wedderburn held an interest in the West India merchant firm of Graham, Simpson & Wedderburn, of Upper Tower Street, London, and was likely a critical agent in the award of the Company's rum contract to this firm in 1810-6, and to its successor Webster, Simpson & Co. in 1817-21.⁵⁸ Within the extant literature of the British fur trade there has been a tendency to romanticise that the HBC did not use rum in its transactions with Aboriginal peoples, unlike the more 'unscrupulous' Canadian and American fur traders.⁵⁹ This view is unfounded however. While Carlos and Lewis found that brandy was the main type of alcohol traded by the Company in the mid-eighteenth century, they also note that the Company traded rum.⁶⁰ Furthermore, this chapter has shown that the Company certainly traded more rum than brandy in the early nineteenth century.

While only around three-fifths of the value of alcohol, the tobacco exported to Hudson's Bay was considerable. 10 per cent (£44,989) of the purchases of consumer trade goods over the period was for tobacco and there were several varieties exported, including Virginia leaf tobacco from the United States, English roll tobacco, and imported Brazil tobacco.⁶¹ The quality of the latter was especially prized by Aboriginal peoples and was a key item that enticed many canoe bands to venture down to the Company's posts on Hudson's Bay before trade shifted inland.⁶² The Company's accounts do, however, underestimate the Company's tobacco exports, as only a small amount of the purchased Brazil tobacco is listed. This was because the Company usually arranged for the direct importation of Brazil tobacco from merchants in Lisbon. Thus the tobacco was already paid for and in the Company's warehouse when the ledgers of 'merchandise exported' were compiled.

Glass beads were another article of particular importance to the trade. While bead purchases only made up 4 per cent (£6,393) of the sums spent on consumer goods over the period, they were more significant than their low value suggests. Indeed, HBC traders considered glass beads to be a 'low-cost, high-profit bauble'.⁶³ Thousands of such beads have been recovered from archaeological fieldwork at historic sites of fur trading posts

⁵⁸ See HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Andrew Colville'; and HBCA, A.25/5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1813-1823.

⁵⁹ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 1, pp. 391, 544-5; and Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 145, 228.

⁶⁰ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 82-3, 92.

⁶¹ See Table 3.3.

⁶² Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp. 143-4.

⁶³ Krech, 'The Kutchin and the Trade in Beads', p. 252.

across North America.⁶⁴ From 1760 to 1820, however, fewer types of beads were traded.⁶⁵ Monochrome beads were the most common variety, followed by imitation wampum beads, whereas polychrome beads were rare during this period.⁶⁶ George Irving Quimby argued that the rise of trade silver in the fur trade supposedly reduced demand for glass beads among Aboriginal communities but the fact that the Company spent more on beads (£6,393) than on silver ornaments (£144) suggests that this may not have been the case for the HBC.⁶⁷ The beads were sewn onto tunics and moccasin trousers and were used to decorate gartering, hairbands, headbands, and knee and ankle bands.⁶⁸ Beads were also in such high demand because they were integrated into a number of local spiritual cultures, which dictated that they be destroyed when people were sick, offered as payments to shamans, and buried with the departed.⁶⁹

The final consumer trade good that was of some significance were metallic ornaments. Only 1 per cent (£4,567) of the purchases on consumer goods over the period relates to such items, yet they were more important than this low value suggests.⁷⁰ There were three articles of particular importance in this category: pewter, tin, and silver. Pewter dishes, plates, and spoons were shipped to the Bay as early as 1674.⁷¹ In particular, ‘alchemy spoons’ were attractive items for Aboriginal peoples and they were often repurposed into decorative uses by separating the bowl of the spoon from the handle, which was then ‘affixed to outer garments in various decorative patterns’ along with such items as coloured beads, pewter buttons and finger rings.⁷² The handles were not wasted

⁶⁴ For instance, see Burley, Hamilton, and Fladmark, *Prophecy of the Swan*, pp. 113-6; Quimby, *Indian Culture*, pp. 81-90, 183-196; and Marvin T. Smith, ‘Eighteenth-Century Glass Beads in the French Colonial Trade’, *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2002), pp. 55-61.

⁶⁵ Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 87-9.

⁶⁶ Popular larger types of monochrome beads used during this period were ‘about ¼ inch in diameter and ¼ to ½ inch long, with eighteen or more facets’ and their colours included ‘aquamarine blue, emerald green, crystal, and old heliotype or lavender’. Smaller monochrome beads were ‘⅜ inch in diameter and from ⅜ to ⅝ inch in length... have fifteen or more facets and generally are cobalt blue although some are of crystal colour’. The imitation wampum beads were ‘small tubular beads about ⅛ inch in diameter and ⅜ to ⅝ inch in length’ and were ‘opaque white, black, or dark blue’ in colour. Polychrome beads used at this time included ‘oval or barrel-shaped (wire-wound) beads of blue or green translucent glass with wreaths of leaves in yellow or white enamel encircling the mid-sections (equators)’ and polka dot beads that were ‘round or spheroidal, usually about ⅜ inch in diameter, and made of opaque glass that is dark blue or black’. The dots were enamel and their colours included plain white or white that was partially superimposed by yellow, or red and blue dots on top of the white. See *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁸ Krech, ‘The Kutchin and the Trade in Beads’, p. 253; and Quimby, *Indian Culture*, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁹ Krech, ‘The Kutchin and the Trade in Beads’, p. 269.

⁷⁰ See Table 3.3.

⁷¹ Red Smith, ‘The Hudson’s Bay Company, London Pewterers and the North American Fur Trade’, *Journal of the Pewter Society*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1995), pp. 49-61.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

but instead ‘made into trinkets or melted down and cast into small amulets’.⁷³ Whereas the initial shipments of pewter to Hudson’s Bay were rather sporadic, by the late eighteenth century they were a routine part of the Company’s trade. The export of tin was more substantial, with a value of £2,998 purchased by the Company between 1783 and 1821. Unfortunately, the Company’s minutes do not shed any light on what items of tin were purchased. The Company’s accounts occasionally described the Company’s ‘tinman’ as supplying medals and decorative tinplates. It is perhaps thus logical to surmise that such items were for decorative purposes. More is known about the use of silver in the North American fur trade. Archaeological discoveries of silver ornaments, together with analysis of the trademarks, hallmarks, and date letters imprinted by silversmiths onto such items, has allowed scholars of the fur trade to accurately date the period in which silver was used.⁷⁴ Silver ornaments only became a feature of the trade after 1760 and rapidly became very popular as an item of exchange with Aboriginal communities.⁷⁵ These silver ornaments were specifically produced for the fur trade in the form of armbands, small circular brooches, plain and star-shaped brooches that were often pierced with geometrical patterns, single and double crosses, crucifixes, earbobs, gorgets (a form of armour worn about the neck), and wristbands.⁷⁶ Their engravings often depicted animals. Amongst Algonkian-speaking peoples, mythical animals were likely an expression of religious beliefs, whereas real animals were probably clan or personal symbols.⁷⁷ Trade silver was produced in Canada, the United States, and Britain.

While the Company’s purchases of producer trade goods (those used for work-related activities) was lower than that spent on consumer trade goods, there were a wide range of items sourced for export. At 54 per cent (£99,076) of the exports, armaments were the highest purchase in the producer goods category.⁷⁸ Purchases here were primarily for guns and gunpowder, which respectively made up 41 (£40,605) and 39 per cent (£38,455) of armament spending.⁷⁹ There appear to have been two sorts of trade guns

⁷³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁷⁴ Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 91.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 92; and Traquair, ‘Trade Silver’, pp. 1-3. Crosses worn by Aboriginal peoples at this time were purely ornamental and did not represent any belief in Christianity. See Ibid., p. 95.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 95-7.

⁷⁸ See Table 3.3.

⁷⁹ See Table 3.3.

procured by the Company.⁸⁰ The first was a three-and-one-half foot gun that was generally referred to as a fowling piece. These guns were popular among Aboriginal peoples who lived in forested areas as the gun offered easier handling than longer types.⁸¹ The shorter guns were less accurate but woodland communities had less need for precision as they used scatter shot to kill large numbers of birds and fired at deer and other large game animals at close quarters.⁸² The other variant was a four foot gun and was generally used by indigenous groups in parkland-grassland areas, as its greater accuracy made it more suitable for warfare.⁸³ Purchases of lead and shot was also substantial at 19 per cent (£19,143).⁸⁴ Several varieties of lead and shot were purchased including: pig lead, sheet lead, Bristol shot, duck shot, small mould shot, and partridge shot.⁸⁵

Metalware comprised 18 per cent (£57,511) of the exports of producer goods.⁸⁶ 59 per cent (£33,894) of this was accounted for by purchases of ironmongery, or the products of ‘ironmongers’ and ‘braziers’.⁸⁷ While the Company’s account books shed little light on what exactly was purchased from ‘ironmongers’ the Committee minutes provide some clues. On 5 March 1806:

Messers Moreton & Foster, Ironmongers, delivered their proposals on the 19th February for supplying the Company with the following articles at the prices undermentioned which was agreed to:

Bayonets large 36/ per dozen
Bayonets small 34/ per dozen
Ice Chissels 24/ per dozen
Ice Chissels common 18/ per dozen
Hatchets large 24/ per dozen.⁸⁸

Ice chisels and hatchets were used by Aboriginal trappers to break open beaver lodges. Guns were rarely used to hunt beaver as bullet holes damaged the quality of the pelt.⁸⁹ The second most significant article in the metalware category were kettles and these made

⁸⁰ While the lengths of the Company’s trade guns are not noted in the Company’s minutes, an entry on the 9 February 1803 makes clear that the Company still procured guns of various sizes in the early nineteenth century. See HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 76.

⁸¹ Ray, *Indians and the Fur Trade*, p. 73.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-5.

⁸⁴ See Table 3.3.

⁸⁵ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 115; and HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 60.

⁸⁶ See Table 3.3.

⁸⁷ See Table 3.3.

⁸⁸ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 10.

⁸⁹ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 86.

up just under one-quarter (£13,152) of such purchases.⁹⁰ Kettles were used by Aboriginal groups to assist food preparation such as in the collecting and boiling of maple syrup.⁹¹ Aboriginal communities also often repurposed broken kettles into new items such as ‘tubular beads, hair pipes, conical trinkets, and arrowheads’.⁹² According to the Company’s minute books it appears that the kettles were made out of brass from 1783 to c.1787.⁹³ Tin kettles were briefly tried in 1788.⁹⁴ It was, however, copper kettles that were the mainstay of the Company’s trade from 1790s onwards. The first reference to copper kettles was in 1787 when Samuel Hands & Co. agreed to provide ‘copper camp kettles of 2 4 and 8 Quarters at 16d. per lb.’.⁹⁵ The fact that copper has a higher thermal conductivity than brass or tin probably accounts for why the Company switched to the use of copper kettles, as this would make them especially well-suited to the cold climates of North America. A vast array of different kettle sizes were supplied including: one-half and one pint kettles; one, two, and three quart kettles; and one, one-and-a-half, two, three, four, five, and six gallon kettles.⁹⁶

Third in the metalware category were knives and hardware, which made up 17 per cent (£10,465) of such exports.⁹⁷ Unfortunately there is no indication in the Company’s minutes as to what other items of hardware were routinely purchased. The only entries that specifically mentioned knives were those with George Russell & Co., who were also occasionally described as a ‘hardwareman’. Knives acquired through trade were highly useful to Aboriginal peoples as metal was scarce in the interior regions of North America. Metal tools such as knives helped to raise productivity in hunting, cooking, and other activities.⁹⁸ One final notable producer good purchased was lines and twine, which comprised 15 per cent (£28,221) of the purchases of producer goods.⁹⁹ Twine was used by Aboriginal communities in the setting of traps underwater, primarily through the use

⁹⁰ See Table 3.3.

⁹¹ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 86-7; and Quimby, *Indian Culture*, pp. 72, 170-5.

⁹² Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 72.

⁹³ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fos. 22, 45.

⁹⁴ Samuel Hall was described as a ‘tinman’ in the Company’s account books and since he was only mentioned once in the minute books as a supplier of tin kettles transactions with him were included in the ‘other metalware’ category. See HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 146.

⁹⁵ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 112.

⁹⁶ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 95.

⁹⁷ See Table 3.3.

⁹⁸ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 167-8.

⁹⁹ See Table 3.3.

of twine nets which caught the beaver as they tried to escape from their lodges.¹⁰⁰ Twine nets made hunting easier and increased productivity.¹⁰¹

While caution has to be taken when using the Company's purchases in this way — due to fact that they reflect the real value of commodities during a period of high inflation — a number of observations about the changing volume of the Company's trade can be made. Table 3.4 shows the Company's average annual purchases of six different consumer trade goods. At first glance, there appears to have been an impressive growth in the Company's export of tobacco but much of this apparent increase is because the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars forced the Company to purchase its Brazil tobacco in London rather than from agents in Lisbon, and thus these orders were now listed in the Company's accounts of 'merchandise exported'.¹⁰² In the case of the purchased slops, however, it is clear that there was a pronounced growth in the volume of such items exported as the increase is too great to be accounted for by war-time inflation. Between 1783-7 (£144) and 1818-21 (£3,994), the value of the slops purchased by the Company rose by 2,674 per cent.¹⁰³ Purchases of blankets were almost five times higher in 1818-21 (£3,022) than they were in 1783-7 (£510), and so it seems reasonable to suggest that the volume of trade at the very least doubled if not tripled.¹⁰⁴ The value of 'cloth' purchased by the Company in 1818-21 (£7,471) was more than three times higher than it was in 1783-7 (£2,017).¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, in the 1810s, the average annual percentage changes for cloth purchases are not so dissimilar to the official values of woollen long cloth as contained in Table 3.1; in 1813-7, the official values were 48 per cent higher than they were in 1808-12, and for the same period the Company's purchases of cloth increased by 45 per cent.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the annual average official value of woollen long cloth exported in 1818-21 was 84 per cent higher than it was in 1813-7, whereas the Company's cloth purchases had increased by 80 per cent.¹⁰⁷ Alcohol is somewhat more problematic. The Company's purchases of alcohol increased by 67 per cent in 1788-92 and by 108 per cent in 1793-7, so it does seem that more alcohol was traded at the close

¹⁰⁰ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 86, 168.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 120.

¹⁰² See Table 3.4.

¹⁰³ See Table 3.4.

¹⁰⁴ See Table 3.4.

¹⁰⁵ See Table 3.4.

¹⁰⁶ See Tables 3.1 and 3.4.

¹⁰⁷ See Tables 3.1 and 3.4.

Table 3.4. HBC's average annual purchases of consumer trade goods for export to Hudson Bay, 1783-1821 (in £).

	Textiles & Clothing					
	Blankets	Percentage Change (%)	Cloth	Percentage Change (%)	Slops	Percentage Change (%)
1783-7	510		2,017		144	
1788-92	1,245	+144	4,127	+105	646	+348
1793-7	1,183	-5	3,836	-7	1,138	+76
1798-1802	1,353	+14	4,267	+11	1,469	+29
1803-7	1,727	+28	3,881	-9	1,331	-9
1808-12	1,403	-19	2,852	-26	1,172	-12
1813-7	2,526	+80	4,148	+45	2,181	+86
1818-21	3,022	+20	7,471	+80	3,994	+83
	Other					
	Alcohol ^a	Percentage Change (%)	Glass Beads	Percentage Change (%)	Tobacco	Percentage Change (%)
1783-7	843		122		60	
1788-92	1,406	+67	217	+78	136	+125
1793-7	2,918	+108	173	-20	301	+121
1798-1802	2,100	-28	193	+11	1,132	+277
1803-7	1,923	-8	210	+9	999	-12
1808-12	2,151	+12	119	-44	1,383	+38
1813-7	2,414	+12	80	-33	2,287	+65
1818-21	2,134	-12	206	+157	3,375	+48

Notes:

^a includes products of distillers, English brandy, malt, rum, and rum brokers.

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁸ In the early nineteenth century, however, the value of alcohol purchased did not substantially change, which perhaps suggests that the Company did not increase the amount of alcohol that it traded despite its intensive rivalry with the NWC.¹⁰⁹ Glass beads present a similar problem, as although purchases of such items was 69 per

¹⁰⁸ See Table 3.4.

¹⁰⁹ See Table 3.4.

Table 3.5. HBC's average annual purchases of producer trade goods for export to Hudson Bay, 1783-1821 (in £).

	Armaments					
	Gunpowder	Percentage Change (%)	Guns	Percentage Change (%)	Lead & Shot	Percentage Change (%)
1783-7	523		853		378	
1788-92	581	+11	1,395	+64	559	+48
1793-7	867	+49	1,170	-16	444	-21
1798-1802	1,428	+65	1,116	-5	432	-3
1803-7	1,083	-24	888	-20	585	+35
1808-12	1,164	+7	863	-3	520	-11
1813-7	1,146	-2	716	-17	391	-25
1818-21	1,123	+2	1,400	+95	650	+66
	Metalware					
	Iron ^a	Percentage Change (%)	Kettles	Percentage Change (%)	Knives & Hardware	Percentage Change (%)
1783-7	849		90		222	
1788-92	662	-22	245	+172	288	+30
1793-7	935	+41	398	+62	279	-3
1798-1802	663	-29	415	+4	268	-4
1803-7	631	-5	348	-16	225	-16
1808-12	794	+26	313	-10	221	-2
1813-7	760	-4	365	+16	244	+10
1818-21	1,515	+99	570	+56	431	+77

Notes:

^a also includes transactions with 'braziers'

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

cent higher in 1818-21 (£206) than they were in 1783-7 (£122), inflation could easily account for this increase.¹¹⁰

Table 3.5 shows the HBC's annual average purchases of six key producer goods that were principally used for trade. The official values contained in Table 3.1 showed

¹¹⁰ See Table 3.4.

that three times as much gunpowder was exported to Hudson's Bay in 1818-21 (£921) than was in 1783-7 (£296).¹¹¹ In contrast, for the same period, the Company's purchases of gunpowder only doubled, rising from £523 to £1,123.¹¹² The fact that more gunpowder was exported does suggest that the Company's trade in guns and lead and shot expanded between 1783-7 and 1818-21, and this growth was probably greater than the 64 per cent (gunpowder) and 72 per cent (lead and shot) increase in the cost of the Company's purchases of these articles.¹¹³ The Company's trade in kettles certainly did increase over the period, as purchases were five times greater in 1818-21 (£570) than they were in 1783-7 (£90).¹¹⁴ While the Company's iron purchases increased by 78 per cent between 1783-7 (£849) and 1818-21 (£1,515), and that spent on knives and hardware almost doubled from £222 to £431, it cannot be said with certainty as to whether this reflects an actual expansion in the trade of such items or an increase in their price.¹¹⁵

From this analysis of the HBC's commodity export trade, it is apparent that rum became the principal form of alcohol traded by the Company in the early nineteenth century, and that there was a growth in the Company's trade of several commodities. Much of this expansion was in the form of consumer goods, especially in the case of ready-made clothing and blankets. There was an increase in the trade of some types of producer trade goods; this was especially the case for kettles, although the trade in armaments also increased. What remains to be established is the tradespeople who supplied the Company with these commodity exports, the origin of these goods, the relationships that the Company formed with its suppliers, and the reasons why these dealings took the form that they did.

III. The Suppliers

How, then, did the Company make its purchases from tradespeople? And how did this reflect the wider pattern of export procurement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? Table 3.6 shows the duration and value of the HBC's supplier contracts and Table 3.7 shows the value distribution of these contracts. These figures include all of the Company's suppliers, whether they provided trading commodities, provisions, or

¹¹¹ See Table 3.1.

¹¹² See Table 3.5.

¹¹³ See Table 3.5.

¹¹⁴ See Table 3.5.

¹¹⁵ See Table 3.5.

Table 3.6. Duration and value of the HBC's supplier contracts, 1783-1821 (in years).

No. of Years	No. of Suppliers	Purchases (£)
39	11	302,538 (27%)
30-8	21	233,639 (21%)
20-9	32	167,962 (15%)
10-9	55	191,444 (18%)
2-9	165	181,626 (17%)
1	159	15,287 (1%)
Total	444	1,092,496

Notes: Purchases to the value of £82,769 from anonymous 'clothiers' were discounted.

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

Table 3.7. Value distribution of the HBC's supplier contracts, 1783-1821 (in £).

	No. of Suppliers
10,000-99,999	28
1,000-9,999	84
100-999	129
<100	202

Notes: Purchases to the value of £82,769 from anonymous 'clothiers' were discounted.

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

services. First, it is clear that the majority of tradespeople from whom the Company purchased commodities only supplied the Company for a short period of time: 159 suppliers held a contract for just one year and 165 suppliers held one for between two and nine years.¹¹⁶ But short-term relationships with suppliers were not the conventional way in which the Company sourced its commodity exports. One-year contracts only accounted

¹¹⁶ See Table 3.6.

for 1 per cent (£15,287) of the purchases.¹¹⁷ In addition, 202 suppliers provided commodities valued under £100 and so while there were a notable number of tradespeople that the Company did business with, most of these transactions were clearly for small purchases of miscellaneous items.¹¹⁸ More striking is the significant number of long-term relationships that the Company developed with suppliers. 119 tradespeople held a contract with the Company for a decade or more and they accounted for 81 per cent of the total purchases.¹¹⁹ Indeed, 11 suppliers held a contract for the full 39 years of the study and they alone provided 27 per cent of the Company's commodity exports.¹²⁰ Over 100 firms maintained contracts with the Company that exceeded £1,000, and 29 suppliers received payments that totalled more than £10,000.¹²¹ The Company thus provided a regular and reliable source of income to over 100 tradespeople in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

These long-term relationships were not confined to specific types of commodities. For instance, Favell & Bousfield, slop sellers of 247 Tooley Street, London held a contract for the full 39 years of the study (£48,740).¹²² Thomas & John Whitehead at Bankside, Southwark were the Company's dyers for the entire period (£25,730).¹²³ For 25 years (1797-1821), Langford & Currey, tobacconists at 8 Shoemaker Row, Blackfriars, supplied most of the Company's English roll and Virginia leaf tobacco.¹²⁴ The majority of the Company's glass beads came from Robert Vigne & Sons, merchants at 1 Coleman Street Buildings, London, and they held a contract for 29 years from 1783-1811 (£5,130).¹²⁵ For 27 years from 1797 to 1821 (£31,162), Pigou, Andrews & Co.,

¹¹⁷ See Table 3.6.

¹¹⁸ See Table 3.7.

¹¹⁹ See Table 3.6.

¹²⁰ See Table 3.6.

¹²¹ See Table 3.7.

¹²² *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783). Small amounts of slops were also provided by Samuel Hill & Son in 1786-92 (£3,358), Robertson & Co. in 1814-6 (£2,254), and Loft & Wallace in 1815-21 (£2,027). London was the centre of the ready-made clothing industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Stanley Chapman, 'The Innovating Entrepreneurs in the British Ready-made Clothing Industry', *Textile History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1993), pp. 5-25.

¹²³ *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783). John and George Whitehead were also one of the London cloth factors that supplied the EIC. See Bowen, 'Sinews', p. 478.

¹²⁴ There were at least eight suppliers of tobacco to the Company between 1783 and 1821. Sainsbury's & Co., tobacconists at 22 Ludgate Hill supplied tobacco to the Company in 1783-96 (£1,768). For Sainsbury's & Co. see *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783); and for Langford & Currey see *Kent's Directory*, 78th Edition (1810). Analysis of the entries noted in the Company's minute books shows that Sainsbury's & Co. and Langford & Currey only supplied Virginia leaf and English roll tobacco to the Company. See A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 17; and HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 11.

¹²⁵ *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783).

gunpowder merchants at 34 Throgmorton Street supplied gunpowder to the Company.¹²⁶ Thomas Izod, brazier at 6 Adams Place, Borough High Street, Southwark, was the Company's supplier of kettles for 30 years between 1787 and 1816 (£10,294).¹²⁷ The Company's grain provisions were supplied by Curtis, Clarke & Co., biscuit baker at Horsleydown Old Stairs, Southwark for the full 39 years (£97,175), and the Company's meat provisions were supplied by Peter & William Mellish, merchant at Shadwell dock for 36 years between 1783 and 1818 (£73,514).¹²⁸ Other major commodities where a supplier held a contract for more than 15 years include: blankets, groceries, guns, iron, lines and twine, knives and hardware, and tin-plate.¹²⁹

It could be argued that the Company's tendency to maintain long-term relationships with its suppliers was poor business practice as this limited competition for contracts and led to the Company paying higher prices for its commodity exports. This view neglects a number of key points however. First, analysis of the Company's minute books shows that there was competition for supplier contracts as the Company routinely considered proposals from several different tradespeople before a contract was assigned. Second, the Company needed to trust its suppliers to provide high-quality merchandise that would meet the exacting standards of Aboriginal peoples. And third, the Company needed its suppliers to fulfil their orders in good time, especially considering there was only one shipment to Hudson's Bay each year. On the whole, these three factors led the Company to maintain long-term relationships with suppliers whom the Company thought reliable.¹³⁰ They also resulted in the Company procuring the majority of its orders from

¹²⁶ *Kent's Directory*, 78th Edition (1810). Other suppliers included John Walton, merchant at 15 Angel Court, Throgmorton Street, from 1783-5 (£1,860) and Thomas Sutton & Co. of the Gunpowder Office, 33 Walbrook, from 1786-96 (£5,433). For John Walton see *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783); and for Sutton & Co. see *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹²⁷ LMA, CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/346/533278, 'Insured: Thomas Izod, 6 Adams Place, Borough High Street, Southwark, brazier', *Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Group*, 24 July 1787.

¹²⁸ *The new complete guide to all persons: who have any trade or concern with the City of London, and parts adjacent*, 16th Edition (1783); and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹²⁹ Of those not subsequently mentioned: Davidson, Newman & Co., grocers and tea dealers at 441 Fenchurch Street were the suppliers of the Company's groceries for all the years of the study; John Burgon & Son, hardwaremen at 15 and 16 Fish Street Hill, held a contract for 30 years between 1792 and 1821 (£2,737); the vast majority of the lines and twine came from Philip & Christopher Splidt, rope, line, twine and net-makers at 74 New Road near Wellclose Square, London, and the Splidts' supplied the Company for 39 years from 1783-1816 (£21,572); the Company's tin-plate came from Samuel Hall, tin-plate-worker at No. 152 Fenchurch Street for the entire 39 years (£2,224) of the study. See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 82; *Baileys Western and Midland Directory*, Vol. 59 (1783); *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783); *Bailey's British Directory*, Vol. 61 (1784); *Kent's Directory*, 78th Edition (1810); and Jacob M. Price, 'William Russell (1740-1818)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹³⁰ The EIC remained loyal to particular suppliers for similar reasons. See Bowen, 'Sinews', p. 474.

metropolitan tradespeople, which included beer, brandy (and gin), glass beads, grains, groceries, guns, gunpowder, hardware, lines and twine, meat, rum, tin-plate, slops, tobacco (English leaf and Virginia roll), wine, and woollen cloth.¹³¹ These suppliers were either manufacturers or intermediary merchants and wholesalers.

While much of the Company's woollen cloth was purchased from unnamed 'clothiers' between 1783 and 1813 (£82,769), it is clear from the Company's minute books that these payments were made to cloth factors at Blackwell Hall, which included Richard Burford, John Fryer, Pearse & Bowen, and George Whitehead, several of whom also supplied cloth to the EIC.¹³² The foremost named suppliers of woollen cloth in the Company's accounts were J. & B. Pearse who provided £40,144 worth of cloth for nine years between 1809 and 1821. Interestingly, the Company's packer, Richard & Charles Alsager of 12 Bearbinder Lane, Mansion House, was also occasionally tasked with securing cloth for the Company, and they were provided with strict instructions from the Committee for this purpose.¹³³ For instance, on 7 December 1796 the Company 'ordered that Mr Alsager the Company's packer do procure the cloth agreeable to the indents from the different factories'.¹³⁴ Similarly, on 10 December 1800 Alsager 'attended and received orders from the Deputy Governor to provide 300 cloths'.¹³⁵ Ralph Davis noted that during the eighteenth-century it was customary for participants in the British overseas trade with the Levant to rely upon Blackwell Hall factors and London packers to source their woollen broadcloth exports.¹³⁶ Their reliance upon these intermediaries, Davis finds, was partly because these agents made it easy for the Levant merchant to buy cloth for

¹³¹ Of those not already stated: Goodwyn, Skinner & Thornton at 21 Lower East Smithfield supplied beer to the value of £6,632 between 1795 and 1821; Joseph Skinner, distiller and tobacconist at 34 Aldgate supplied £7,031 worth of 'English brandy' to the Company between 1783 and 1791; Hatch, Smith & Co. were the Company's suppliers of brandy and malt in 1792-1806 (£27,945) and in 1807-10 (£7,155) Smith & Curries — probably a subsidiary of Hatch, Smith & Co. — supplied the Company, and this firm was possibly located at Vine Street, Bloomsbury; William Wilson, hardwaremen at 35 Cannon Street, supplied hardware for 10 years from 1783-92 (£1,959); Graham, Simpson & Wedderburn of Upper Tower Street and its successor firm of Webster, Simpson & Co. supplied the Company with rum to the value of £25,826 in 1810-21; Beachcroft & Calcrow, merchants at 36 St. Mary Hill, provided £7,174 worth of wine between 1792 and 1821. See HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Andrew Colville'; *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783); *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); *Kent's Directory*, 78th Edition (1810); and Barnett, *Hub of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 45.

¹³² HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 48; HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 12, 67; HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fo. 53; Bowen, 'Sinews', p. 478; and Willmott, 'British Fur Trade Textile', p. 209.

¹³³ *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783). Alsager & Co. acted as the Company's packers for the full 39 years of this study and received payments to the sum of £10,543.

¹³⁴ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 83.

¹³⁵ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 29.

¹³⁶ Davis, *Devonshire Square*, pp. 96, 107-9, 114-5.

export but — even when the merchants wanted to take a more active role in cloth purchases — they were largely dependent upon the cloth factors' connections with provincial manufacturers in Yorkshire and the West Country.¹³⁷ This was even more the case when the merchant desired high-quality cloth, as the supply of these sorts was often limited on account of the fineness of the wool or the skill of the individual weaver.¹³⁸ The HBC's extensive use of London intermediaries to supply its exported woollen cloth was not, therefore, because the Company was 'lazy', but rather it was necessitated by the Company's need for high-quality textiles. Like the EIC and British merchants trading to the Levant, the HBC's woollen cloth was dyed in London so that it could be suitably adapted to the specific tastes of Aboriginal peoples in North America.¹³⁹

Until at least 1802, most of the Company's woollen cloth came from the West Country but after this year, however, it does appear that the Company switched to suppliers in Yorkshire. On 13 January 1802, the Company's packer informed the London Committee that 'Swaines manufactured a cloth superior in quality and two pence half penny per yard lower than the cloths called Worcesters usually sent to the Bay'.¹⁴⁰ Presumably this was a reference to the Swaines who were 'established in all branches of the cloth industry throughout Yorkshire'.¹⁴¹ The Committee decided that Swaines would supply the Company with cloth from their manufactory, yet there is no record of them in the Company's accounts of 'merchandise exported'.¹⁴² This is probably because the trade was still conducted through a Blackwell Hall factor so the Company made payment to them rather than Swaines.¹⁴³ In addition, Abram Greenwood, manufacturer of strouds at Dewsbury near Leeds, offered the Committee a bale of strouds in December 1802.¹⁴⁴ On this occasion, there is no record that the Company accepted the request and Greenwood is not listed in the Company's ledgers. The fact that it was the Company's packer that informed the Committee of the superior quality and cheaper price of Swaines' woollen cloth, shows how the Company relied upon the commercial contacts of these intermediaries. It is also known that the woollens used by the NWC in the early nineteenth

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 107, 114-5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 110-1.

¹³⁹ See Ibid., p. 112; and Bowen, 'Sinews', p. 475.

¹⁴⁰ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 52.

¹⁴¹ Willmott, 'British Fur Trade Textile', p. 212.

¹⁴² HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 52.

¹⁴³ This method of payment was also used in the Levant trade. See Davis, *Devonshire Square*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁴ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 73.

century were produced in Yorkshire, and that Swaines was one of their suppliers.¹⁴⁵ While the HBC did not do business with the new breed of Yorkshire ‘merchant-manufacturers’ that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries — who sought to bypass the London cloth factors by establishing their own warehouses in the capital — the Company’s use of Blackwell Hall factors no doubt continued because of the Company’s need for high-quality woollens.¹⁴⁶ Willmott maintains that the NWC did do business with some London ‘warehousemen’ who sold Yorkshire woollens around 1800, but more research is needed to firmly establish who these suppliers were.¹⁴⁷ The fact that the HBC sourced its woollen cloth from Yorkshire after 1802, rather than from the West Country, suggests that the Company was receptive to some of the innovative textile industries in the north of England.¹⁴⁸ In the case of woollen cloth, therefore, it may be the case that the HBC was actually more amenable to northern manufacturers than was the EIC.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, since there was little prospect that British merchants and manufacturers would attack the HBC’s Charter, the Company, unlike the EIC, had little need to support ailing parts of the British economy in an effort to ensure a degree of support from British manufacturers.¹⁵⁰ There is also the issue of whether northern textile manufacturers were, by 1800, able to replicate the exact commodity specifications that the Asian market required.¹⁵¹

The Company did source a number of its commodity exports from regions outside of London when this proved expedient. This was particularly the case for the Company’s blankets, Brazil tobacco, knives, and silver ornaments. The Company’s blankets were exclusively sourced from Witney in Oxfordshire, first from Thomas Empson in 1783-1805 (£26,164) and then subsequently from John Early & Sons in 1806-21 (£35,592).¹⁵² By 1783, the Company’s connection to the Witney blanket makers was already a well-established one, as a James Empson supplied blankets to the Company as early as 1737.¹⁵³ The Company’s minutes show that the Company maintained a regular correspondence

¹⁴⁵ Willmott, ‘British Fur Trade Textile’, pp. 210-2.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 211. Also see Peter Maw, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire Ascendant: England’s Textile Exports to New York and Philadelphia, 1750-1805’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2010), pp. 734-68.

¹⁴⁷ Willmott, ‘British Fur Trade Textile’, p. 212.

¹⁴⁸ Maw, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire Ascendant’, pp. 734-68.

¹⁴⁹ Bowen, ‘Sinews’, pp. 466-86.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 484.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 474, 484.

¹⁵² *Baileys Western and Midland Directory*, Vol. 59 (1783), p. 351. £68 worth of blankets was also supplied by John Maberly in 1816. See HBCA, A.25/5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1813-1823, fos. 25-6.

¹⁵³ HBCA, A.25/1, *Merchandise Exported*, 1737-1749, fo. 3.

with its Witney blanket makers. Often this was to ensure that the produced blankets and duffels were suitable for the fur trade. For instance, on 27 February 1805 Thomas Empson was asked to make the coloured strips on the white duffels ‘as bright and lively as possible’.¹⁵⁴ The Company was not afraid to show its dissatisfaction, such as on 21 January 1795 when Empson was desired ‘to reconsider his proposals for supplying the Company with Blankets this year.’¹⁵⁵ The Company’s patronage was evidently a lucrative one for the blanket makers as individual manufactures took great lengths to maintain the Company’s business. It was also a highly convenient relationship for the blanket makers, as the need to fulfil the Company’s orders by April kept their looms at work during the winter.¹⁵⁶ Upon the death of Thomas Empson in the spring of 1805, the Company received numerous letters recommending John Early & Sons as the Company’s future blanket makers.¹⁵⁷ John Early solicited the Company’s business on 18 April 1805, specifically mentioning that he was one of the executors to the late Thomas Empson, and Susanna Empson sent a letter to the Committee on 28 April 1805 ‘recommending John Early & Son Executors of the late brother Thomas Empson to succeed to the Company’s business’.¹⁵⁸

The Committee acceded to these requests, and the Company became John Early & Son’s most important customer. The surviving sales ledgers of the Witney firm show that the value of the duffels, blanketing, and point blankets (referred to as ‘kerseys’) purchased by the Company each year ranged from £1,384 to £1,977 in 1815-9.¹⁵⁹ After the HBC, Early’s next most important customers were usually the London Houses that supplied the NWC. For instance, Inglis, Ellice purchased kerseys and another form of point blanket called ‘Hudson’ from the Witney firm in 1815 (£754), 1816 (£539), 1817-8 (£540), and 1819 (£526).¹⁶⁰ Gillespie, Gerrard & Co. (the successor firm of Mackenzie, Gillespie &

¹⁵⁴ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 116.

¹⁵⁵ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 47.

¹⁵⁶ Alfred Plummer and Richard E. Early, *The Blanket Makers, 1669-1969: A History of Charles Early & Marriott (Witney) Ltd* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 40.

¹⁵⁷ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 120.

¹⁵⁸ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fos. 120, 122.

¹⁵⁹ Value of the Company’s purchases were as follows: £1,384 (1815), £1,167 (1816), £1,977 (1818), and £1,439 (1819). The firm’s records for 1817 appear incomplete. See Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC), B1/2/F4/2, ‘John Early’s Ledgers’, *Early’s of Witney PLC (Blanket Manufacturers)*, 1818-23; and OHC, B1/2/F1/1, ‘John Early Sales and Purchase Ledger’, *Early’s of Witney PLC (Blanket Manufacturers)*, 1815-29.

¹⁶⁰ OHC, B1/2/F4/2, ‘John Early’s Ledgers’, *Early’s of Witney PLC (Blanket Manufacturers)*, 1818-23; and OHC, B1/2/F1/1, ‘John Early Sales and Purchase Ledger’, *Early’s of Witney PLC (Blanket Manufacturers)*, 1815-29.

Parker) purchased kerseys to the value of £692 in 1815 and £539 in 1816.¹⁶¹ There is also correspondence which shows that Inglis, Ellice placed an order with Early's for 125 pairs of point blankets in March 1814, and that Brickwood & Daniel purchased duffels and point blankets from the firm in 1803.¹⁶² The fact that Early's was supplying point blankets to both the HBC and the Canada merchants suggests that this firm specialised in supplying the fur trade. It also shows that manufacturers had effective access to both the Canada and Hudson's Bay fur trades. In the early nineteenth century, British manufacturers challenged the EIC's monopoly precisely because they believed that they could better access the Indian market through an open trade. Therefore, a central reason why British merchants and manufacturers did not challenge the HBC's Charter in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries — or oppose the emergence of monopoly in 1821 — was because they already thought that they had effective access to the fur trade.

Brazil tobacco was another commodity that the Committee sought to source from outside of London. In the late eighteenth century, the Company imported Brazil tobacco directly from contacts in Lisbon. From at least 1783 to 1788, there was a regular correspondence with Mellish & Devisme in Lisbon for this purpose.¹⁶³ However, it does appear that the Company had several contacts in the Portuguese capital as a letter was read to the London Committee from Creusè, Silva & Co. in December 1784 and the Secretary reported on 17 May 1786 that he had paid £1,021 18s. 6d. for duty and fees on 19 rolls of Brazil Tobacco which had arrived on the *Hope* as consigned from John Hughes in Lisbon.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, a significant amount of duty was charged on the importation of Brazil tobacco and the amount was several times the actual value of the produce.¹⁶⁵ The expense could, however, be reclaimed in part through a drawback (a remittance of the customs' duties paid when imported foreign produce was exported) when the tobacco was

¹⁶¹ OHC, B1/2/F1/1, 'John Early Sales and Purchase Ledger', *Early's of Witney PLC (Blanket Manufacturers)*, 1815-29. While Peter Deslauriers suggests that Gillespie, Gerrard & Co. was not involved in the fur trade, the fact that the firm purchased point blankets suggests that they did maintain an interest in the trade. See Peter Deslauriers, 'Samuel Gerrard', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 8 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

¹⁶² 'Brickwood & Daniel to John Early & Son' 15 January 1803, 'H. Bucham to John Early & Son' 28 September 1813, 'Inglis, Ellice to John Early & Son' 15 March and 8 November 1814, OHC, B1/2/F16/1, 'Early & Co. Correspondence', *Early's of Witney PLC (Blanket Manufacturers)*, 1790-1900. Also see Alfred Plummer, ed., *The Witney Blanket Industry: The Records of the Witney Blanket Weavers* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1934), pp. 232-3, 239.

¹⁶³ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fos. 3-4, 13, 16, 19-20, 25, 61, 63, 79, 88, 130, 132, 138, 149-51.

¹⁶⁴ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fos. 33, 89.

¹⁶⁵ For example, duty on 30 rolls of Brazil tobacco imported on the *Neptune* in 1784 amounted to £2,226 10s. 6d., whereas only £361 5s. 7d. was actually paid to Mellish & Devisme. HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fos. 23, 25.

re-exported to Hudson's Bay.¹⁶⁶ Unfortunately, none of the payments to Mellish & Devisme were listed in the Company's accounts of exported merchandise, no doubt because the Company had already paid for these direct imports. The Company's minutes do occasionally record the amount that was paid to the Company's Lisbon agents. In 1784, £361 was paid to Mellish & Devisme.¹⁶⁷ This was considerably more than the £109 paid to Sainsbury's & Co. for English roll and Virginia leaf that same year.¹⁶⁸

It is not clear who supplied Brazil tobacco to the Company in 1789-94, in part because there are no minute books for the years 1789-92 but also because the minutes do not mention Brazil tobacco until 1795. In that year, three rolls to the value of £78 were purchased from David-Alves Rebello & Co., merchant at Mare Street, Hackney, and the Rainbow Coffee House, Cornhill.¹⁶⁹ Direct importation from Lisbon was re-established from 1796 to at least 1800, when Lucena & Crawford supplied Brazil tobacco to the Company.¹⁷⁰ Thereafter the Company started to rely solely upon metropolitan tobacco brokers. Perhaps the first of these was Edward Spencer, tobacco merchant and manufacturer at 'Vine-co.', Queen Street, who supplied £41 worth of Brazil tobacco in 1799.¹⁷¹ In 1803-9 (£561), Brazil tobacco was purchased from Kymer M. Taggart & Co. and they were followed by Brandon & Sons in 1810-7 (£449). The total amounts paid to these firms for the six and seven years that they respectively supplied the Company show that the amount of Brazil tobacco that the Company exported to Hudson's Bay in the early nineteenth century was much less than that supplied by Mellish & Devisme in the 1780s. Dislocation to overseas trade as a result of the Napoleonic Wars no doubt accounts for why the Company stopped arranging its own importation of Brazil tobacco via Lisbon, as well as the low amounts purchased from London tobacco brokers.

By the end of 1814, the Company had severe difficulties in sourcing its tobacco. While purchases of Brazil tobacco were reduced in the early nineteenth century, the War of 1812 severely disrupted the supply of Virginia leaf tobacco to the British market. As a result, Virginia tobacco rose to an 'extreme high price'.¹⁷² The Company asked Langford

¹⁶⁶ For instance, the Company received a drawback of £2,064 10s. when the *Seahorse* exported a consignment of Brazil tobacco to Hudson's Bay. HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 26.

¹⁶⁷ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 26.

¹⁶⁸ HBCA, A.25/3, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-9, fo. 20.

¹⁶⁹ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 47-8; and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹⁷⁰ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 82; and HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fos. 18-20.

¹⁷¹ HBCA, A.25/3, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1799, fo. 87; and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹⁷² HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 11.

& Currey whether they could manufacture their roll tobacco from Brazil leaf tobacco instead of the usual Virginia leaf.¹⁷³ They informed the Committee that no drawback would be payable on the manufactured tobacco as drawbacks were only valid on articles that maintained their precise form at the time of entry.¹⁷⁴ In consequence, English roll that was manufactured from Brazil leaf tobacco would be extortionately expensive. A more realistic alternative soon presented itself. While in New York on 14 March 1814, Colin Robertson, a former NWC clerk who was now in the service of the HBC — and was preparing an inland trading venture that would set out from Montreal — wrote a letter to Andrew Wedderburn Colville. In the letter he explained that ‘I have got an excellent lot of tobacco for the Indian trade which belonged to Mr Astor’, and a further letter of the same date that was addressed to the London Committee explained that Wedderburn had procured ‘seven thousand weight of excellent tobacco made on purpose for the Indian trade’.¹⁷⁵ The fact that this tobacco was made especially for the fur trade shows, once again, that the trade required close attention to the commodities that were offered to Aboriginal communities. The tobacco was shipped to Maitland, Garden & Auldjo, the HBC’s new agents in Montreal. It is unclear exactly how Robertson’s transaction with Astor worked in practice due to the on-going Anglo-American war. On 29 March 1815, it was ordered that 8,000 lbs. of the ‘Maryland tobacco’ should be shipped from Montreal to London for the use of the Company.¹⁷⁶ Alternative sources were therefore found and problems in the Company’s supply of English roll proved temporary.

Even though the amount of Brazil tobacco acquired by the Company had notably declined since the late eighteenth century, the Company was still presented with problems in sourcing a satisfactory supply. Branden & Son reported to the London Committee on 5 April 1815 that there was ‘no Brazil tobacco in town but what is[, is] very bad’.¹⁷⁷ With an unsatisfactory quality of Brazil tobacco available on the London market and peace in Europe, the Company seems to have looked into re-establishing its practice of arranging the direct importation of its own tobacco from Lisbon. In May 1820, a Lisbon correspondent informed the Company that ‘Brazil Tobacco had considerably advanced in price’.¹⁷⁸ Whether the Company actually rekindled its more proactive efforts to source an

¹⁷³ HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 11.

¹⁷⁴ HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 13.

¹⁷⁵ HBCA, A.10/1, *London Inward Correspondence — General*, 1712-1816, fos. 218-9, 222-3.

¹⁷⁶ HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 21.

¹⁷⁷ HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 22.

¹⁷⁸ The name of the correspondent was possibly Henry Sissken but the writing is unclear. See HBCA, A.1/52, *London Minute Book*, 1818-21, fo. 70.

acceptable quality of Brazil tobacco for its trade remains unknown. What is evident from this analysis is that the HBC went to great lengths to source tobacco that would satisfy the desires of Aboriginal communities. Direct connections with Lisbon were routinely made to arrange the importation of high-quality Brazil tobacco that was scarce on a London market that was limited by strict commercial legislation.

Knives and silver ornaments were another example where the Company went beyond the use of London intermediaries. At the very least, £5,465 was spent on knives between 1789 and 1821, and all of this is attributable to Russell & Co. of Birmingham who were large-scale exporters of Birmingham and Sheffield ironware.¹⁷⁹ The reason why the Company established this direct connection with Birmingham's burgeoning metallurgical industry appears to be because the Company wanted its knives to be specially adapted to the fur trade. Indeed, the Company's minutes specifically mentioned 'Indian knives' when noting the reading of a letter from William Russell, the Company's principal supplier of knives, to the Committee.¹⁸⁰ As regards the Company's trade silver, it is clear that compared to the Montreal fur trade, the HBC was slow in adding silver ornaments to its trade. The first mention of trade silver in the Company's minute books was on 5 March 1794 when a 'dozen of silver plate trinkets according to the pattern sent from AR [Albany] and EM [Eastmain] be provided and sent to those Factories'.¹⁸¹ This view is further substantiated by the fact that the standard of trade for the Company's silver articles was not fixed until May 1797.¹⁸² The Company's accounts list four different silversmiths, although they do not span the entire period. Thomas Ayres supplied the Company with silver ornaments for four years between 1801 and 1807 (£62), Joseph Hearn in 1803 (£13), John Gray in 1820 (£13), and M. R. Boulton, no doubt meaning Matthew Robinson Boulton of the Birmingham firm Boulton & Watt, in 1820 (£56).¹⁸³ Interestingly, none of these names correspond to the London silversmiths who are thought

¹⁷⁹ See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 82; and Jacob M. Price, 'William Russell (1740-1818)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁸⁰ HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 26.

¹⁸¹ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 31.

¹⁸² HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 94.

¹⁸³ Jennifer Tann, 'Matthew Boulton (1728-1809)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Unfortunately, Thomas Ayres, Joseph Hearn, and John Gray were not found during the search of trade directories. The following directories were searched: *Bailey's Western and Midland Directory*, Vol. 59 (1783); *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783); *The London Directory (Lowndes)*, 22nd Edition (1783); *The new complete guide to all persons: who have any trade or concern with the City of London, and parts adjacent*, 16th Edition (1783); *Bailey's British Directory*, 1st Edition (1784); *Kent's Directory*, 53rd Edition (1785); *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); and *Kent's Directory*, 78th Edition (1810).

to have made silver ornaments for the fur trade between 1763 and 1805.¹⁸⁴ At only £144, the total amount purchased by the Company from Ayres, Boulton, Gray, and Hearn was especially low. Indeed, the Canadian fur traders James and Andrew McGill purchased £4,181 worth of ‘silverworks’ from various Montreal silversmiths in 1797-1801.¹⁸⁵ It is possible that the Company’s trade silver did not always come from those exclusively described as silversmiths but rather from other suppliers. For example, on 30 November 1796 it was requested that a letter be sent ‘to William & George Russell of Birmingham to be informed of the prices of certain articles of silver according to the pattern sent them’.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, in addition to supplying the Company with knives and other hardware, it is clear that Russell & Co. were, at least for a time, also manufacturing the Company’s trade silver.¹⁸⁷ Since Russell & Co. were asked to engrave designs onto silver ornaments it is possible that they also made decorative handles for the knives that they supplied to the Company.¹⁸⁸ More significantly, it is clear that the Company had established links with manufacturers in Birmingham for its supply of silver ornaments in order to procure items that were explicitly designed for the fur trade.

While it is less clear as to where the Company’s kettles were manufactured, there were at least a few temporary connections with provincial suppliers. Mark Harford of the Brass Battery, Wire & Copper Company supplied kettles to the HBC from 1783-5 (£282). Harford’s company actually manufactured its kettles in Bristol but had a warehouse in London at 43 Bread Street.¹⁸⁹ Harford was followed by Hands & Co. in 1786 (£63) but for the next 30 years between 1787 and 1816 (£10,294), Thomas Izod, brazier at 6 Adams Place, Borough High Street, Southwark, provided the Company’s kettles.¹⁹⁰ During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, London had a significant copper industry

¹⁸⁴ The London silversmiths who are thought to have manufactured silver ornaments for the fur trade include Peter Arno (c.1768), Hester Bateman (c.1771-81), William Evans (c.1761-74), George Hemming and William Chawner (c.1781), and Luke Kendall (c.1775). See Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 197.

¹⁸⁵ Traquair, ‘Trade Silver’, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁶ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 82. For other mentions of Russell & Co. in the Company’s minutes see HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 83-4.

¹⁸⁷ The Company regularly corresponded with George Russell in Birmingham over the knives and ‘trinkets’ that he supplied to them. See HBCA, A.5/4, *London Correspondence Book Outwards — General*, 1788-1808, fo. 157.

¹⁸⁸ Some of the iron knives excavated from Odawa burial sites in modern-day Michigan had decorative handles with perforated brass. See Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 146.

¹⁸⁹ Peter Wakelin, ‘James Harford (1734-1817)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and *Kent’s Directory*, 51st Edition (1783).

¹⁹⁰ LMA, CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/346/533278, ‘Insured: Thomas Izod, 6 Adams Place, Borough High Street, Southwark, brazier’, *Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Group*, 24 July 1787. There was also a very small purchase of kettles from William Savage in 1815 (£9).

that was particularly specialised in manufacturing equipment for brewing, distilling, and sugar refining so it is probable that Izod did manufacture the Company's kettles in the capital rather than acting as an intermediary.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, in 1820, McTavish, Fraser's invoice to the NWC shows that Izod supplied the London firm with copper kettles to the value of £439.¹⁹² The HBC did consider returning to provincial suppliers however. In 1793, the Company made an application to the Mines Royal Company for their prices of brass and copper kettles, which had mines and smelters in Cumberland and Cardiganshire, and it is known that the Mines Royal were one of the sources of the EIC's copper exports.¹⁹³ While the HBC Committee decided not to award their patronage to the Mines Royal due to the 'considerably lower' prices of Thomas Izod, it is clear that the Company was actively considering provincial sources of supply.¹⁹⁴ In 1817, the HBC passed its kettle contract to Shelton & Son and the firm held it to at least 1821 (£2,504). It is significant that the Company and McTavish, Fraser seem to have chosen to do business directly with manufacturers and not merchants or wholesalers when purchasing their trade kettles. This decision no doubt reflected the specialised nature of the trade: the need to meet the exacting standards demanded by Aboriginal consumers and ensure that the exported commodities were suitable for the cold climes of North America.

Of all the commodities that the Company exported to Hudson's Bay, it was the quality of the supplied armaments and metalwares that were most susceptible to the challenging local environment. Gun-making was one of London's pre-eminent industries, and the Company exclusively sourced its guns from two metropolitan gunsmiths; William Wilson & Son, gun-makers at 154 Minories, and Edward Bond, gunsmith at 59 Lombard Street and 31 Nicholas Lane, respectively supplied £34,732 and £5,807 worth of guns to the Company between 1783 and 1821. The quality of the exported guns was always a central concern for the Company as any faults in the metalwork could be rendered more serious by the low temperatures in Hudson's Bay. Armourers were stationed at the Company's posts to maintain quality control and they were also checked prior to export by an experienced gun inspector.¹⁹⁵ From the winter of 1815 onwards, Edward James

¹⁹¹ David Barnett, *London: The Hub of the Industrial Revolution: A Revisionary History, 1775-1825* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), pp. 76-7.

¹⁹² HBCA, F.4/20, *North West Company — Account Book*, 1820, fos. 25-6.

¹⁹³ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 24; Bowen, 'Sinews', p. 479; and Cecil T. Carr, ed., *Select Charters of Trading Companies A.D. 1530-1707* (London: Selden Society, 1913), p. xcvi.

¹⁹⁴ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 24.

¹⁹⁵ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 98-9.

Bond continued his late father's role as the Company's 'Inspector of Guns'.¹⁹⁶ As in the case of blankets, knives, and other commodities, the Company showed great loyalty to those who supplied the Company with high-quality guns. For instance, upon attending a general meeting at Hudson's Bay House, William Wilson 'received additional orders to make as many of the better kind of locks for the guns intended for the Factories the ensuing season as he possibly can'.¹⁹⁷

The lead and shot supplied to the HBC was not sourced direct from manufacturers but it is highly probable that most of these articles came from the north-east of England. Indeed, the Company's principal supplier of lead and shot over the period was John Locke & Co. of London who sold the manufactured lead goods produced by Locke, Blackett & Co. of Newcastle, and much of the lead used by this northern firm no doubt came from the colliery owned by the Blackett family in Wylam, Northumberland.¹⁹⁸ The Company purchased lead and shot to the value of £10,078 from Locke & Co. between 1797 and 1821. Prior to this, the Company's lead shot was produced in London, as Freeman & Co., lead merchants and shot-makers at 24 Mark Lane, held the Company's lead contract in 1783-96 (£6,567).¹⁹⁹ By the second decade of the nineteenth century there appears to have been competitive bidding for the Company's orders, as alternative suppliers managed to briefly wrestle the contract away from John Locke. Thomas Preston & Co. held the contract for the years 1808-9 (£1,478), Bowring, Lockner & Co. for 1811 (£405), and Walker, Maltby & Co. for 1819 (£615). Many of these firms also supplied the EIC, and in 1820, Walker, Maltby supplied Inglis, Ellice and McTavish Fraser with £126 and £319 worth of lead and shot respectively.²⁰⁰

Quality control was also a key concern for the Company when it came to ironmongery. There were nine ironmongers who supplied the Company over the period but the most significant of these was Moreton & Foster who supplied the Company for 16 years between 1806 and 1821 (£13,868). On 13 December 1809, Foster of the firm Moreton & Foster attended a general meeting to answer the complaints that the Company's servants had made against the hatchets, ice chisels, and other goods supplied by them.²⁰¹ Thereafter, a representative of Moreton & Foster appear to have attended a

¹⁹⁶ HBCA, A.1/51, *London Minute Book*, 1814-8, fo. 43a.

¹⁹⁷ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 55.

¹⁹⁸ D. J. Rowe, *Lead Manufacturing in Britain: a history* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 122-7, 148.

¹⁹⁹ *Kent's Directory*, 51st Edition (1783).

²⁰⁰ HBCA, F.4/20, *North West Company — Account Book*, 1820, fos. 1, 16; and Bowen, 'Sinews', pp. 481-2.

²⁰¹ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 108.

committee meeting each year ‘to receive instructions respecting the hatchets, nails &c to be sent to the Bay’, such as on 18 March 1812 in the case of a Mr Cook.²⁰² As Carlos and Lewis have shown, the Company made many attempts to improve the quality of the supplied metal products during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth-century.²⁰³ The early metal products that were sent to the Bay proved highly susceptible to the sub-arctic climate, where winter conditions were far more severe than in England.²⁰⁴ Any cracks in the metal surface made such tools especially brittle, as when water froze in the cracks it weakened their structure. To combat this, higher quality items were sourced and some metal items were crafted by smiths at the Company’s posts but it appears that, in the case of Moreton & Foster at least, the Company closely worked with its suppliers to make sure that they produced metalwares that could withstand the severe cold.²⁰⁵ Unfortunately, it cannot be said with certainty as to the origins of the hatchets, ice chisels, nails, and bayonets that Moreton & Foster supplied to the Company, but by 1783, most of the hardware and iron products retailed in London were most probably made by manufactures in Birmingham rather than metropolitan craftsmen.²⁰⁶

Glass beads are another item whose origins are unclear. The Company sourced glass beads from two main suppliers. The majority were purchased from Robert Vigne & Sons, merchants at 1 Coleman Street Buildings, London, and they held a contract for 29 years from 1783-1811 (£5,130).²⁰⁷ In 1812, Joseph Philips & Sons took on the Company’s bead orders and they fulfilled them until at least 1821 (£1,263). One of the varieties purchased by the Company around 1750 was known as ‘barleycorn’, and this bead had its origins in mid-eighteenth century Venice.²⁰⁸ Indeed, existing studies of the fur trade usually attribute Venice, Bohemia, or the Low Countries as the place of manufacture for the beads that were used in the fur trade.²⁰⁹ In light of the expansion of British glassmaking in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the notable innovations that occurred in many British industries at this time, the view that all of the glass beads used in the Atlantic

²⁰² A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fo. 56.

²⁰³ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 97-9.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.

²⁰⁶ Barnett, *Hub of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 164.

²⁰⁷ *Kent’s Directory*, 51st Edition (1783).

²⁰⁸ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 105. Barleycorn were ‘small, round beads in white, black, and more rarely blue’. See Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 219.

²⁰⁹ Burley, Hamilton, and Fladmark, *Prophecy of the Swan*, pp. 113-6; Donald Scott Crull, ‘The Economy and Archaeology of European-made Glass Beads and Manufactured Goods Used in First Contact Situations in Oregon, California and Washington’, PhD Thesis (University of Sheffield, 1997), pp. 16-30; and Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 82.

fur trade were European imports is questionable.²¹⁰ It is certainly possible that at least some of the beads purchased by the Company were manufactured in Britain. David Barnett notes that Vigne, Neave, Winscote & Walker had a large-scale glass bottle manufactory in Southwark in 1774.²¹¹ Was this the same Vigne whom the Company purchased their glass beads from and which *Kent's Directory* (1783) listed as a 'merchant'? Thomas Birch's *History of the Royal Society of London* (1760) notes that attempts were made to produce blue beads 'much esteemed by those of Guinea' as early as 1680, but while the colour could be successfully replicated, the strength and durability could not.²¹² By 1764, glass beads were still imported from Italy but the *Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* issued a premium on 11 April 1764 in order to promote their production:

251. To the Person who shall produce to the Society, on or before the first Tuesday in March 1765, the greatest Quantity and Variety of Glass Bugles or Beads, made in *England* or *Wales*, fit for the *African*, *American*, and *Asiatic* Trade; the nearest in Goodness and Quality to those imported from *Italy*, and which may be afforded as cheap for Exportation; not less than one hundred and half weight; fifty Guineas.²¹³

It is unclear as to whether this attempt was successful. Around 1797, artificial pearls made out of glass and filled with wax were still supposedly imported into Britain from manufactories in France and possibly the Netherlands and Germany.²¹⁴ On 4 October 1814, however, an article in *The Times* noted that 'while the Slave Trade was lawful in England, great quantities of glass beads were manufactured here of a sort not used in this country, or in any other part of the world than Africa, but which were largely exported to the continent, where they were greedily purchased by the natives'.²¹⁵ If glass beads were specifically manufactured in Britain for the slave trade then it seems plausible that at least some of the glass beads that were used in the fur trade after 1765 were also British manufactures.

²¹⁰ In particular, see Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, especially pp. 111-92; and Geoffrey Edwards, *Art of Glass: Glass in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1998), pp. 100-33.

²¹¹ Barnett, *Hub of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 104.

²¹² Thomas Birch, *The History of the Royal Society of London, Vol. 4* (London, 1760), p. 34.

²¹³ Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce, *Premiums Offered by the Society Instituted in London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce* (London, 1764), p. 54.

²¹⁴ John Beckmann, *A History of Inventions and Discoveries, Vol. 2*, trans. William Johnson (London: Printed for J. Bell, No. 148, Oxford Street, 1797), pp. 1-20.

²¹⁵ *The Times*, 4 October 1814.

What is certain from this study is that quality was a defining feature of the HBC's export procurement between 1783 and 1821. Indeed, in a letter to William Auld and the Council at Churchill Factory on 25 May 1803, the Company stated that:

Our articles of trade from their superior quality will we are persuaded command a preference. The cloth and blankets are superior to any we ever before sent to the Bay, and particular attention has been paid to every other article.²¹⁶

Sourcing high-quality commodity exports was, therefore, a key way in which the Company sought to ensure that Aboriginal peoples traded with the Company rather than its competitors. The search for quality largely defined the suppliers with whom the Company did business, but these were pragmatic transactions as the Company sought to acquire such goods on the best possible terms and from those who could timely fulfil their orders. The Company's woollen cloth continued to be supplied by factors at Blackwell Hall but early in the nineteenth century it is apparent that Yorkshire woollens were favoured over those from the West Country. In the case of blankets, Brazil tobacco, knives, and silver ornaments, the Company established direct connections with merchants and manufacturers outside of London. The Company also seems to have, at the very least, acquired its exported guns and kettles direct from manufacturers rather than through intermediaries. The concern over quality can also be seen in the provisions that were supplied to the Company's servants. The types of meat that the Company exported to Hudson's Bay mainly consisted of beef, pork, and bacon, although veal and mutton were also occasionally sent out, and these were to be of 'the very best quality', as was the exported beer.²¹⁷ The Company's preference for Jamaica rum over Leeward Island rum was also largely determined by quality.²¹⁸ The reason why the Company supplied its servants with high-quality provisions was because it needed to keep these servants loyal to the Company and to encourage them to renew their contracts. This was especially important during the period of this study, as the Company sought to expand its inland operations. For similar reasons, the Company also attempted to satisfy its servants requests for particular commodities, which is an aspect that chapter six explores in detail.

The discerning tastes of Aboriginal communities in North America ultimately fed the Company's desire to source high-quality trade items. In order to meet the exacting

²¹⁶ HBCA, A.6/16, *London Correspondence Book Outwards — Official*, 1796-1803, fo. 185.

²¹⁷ For instance, see HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 39; and HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fos. 57-8.

²¹⁸ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 16.

standards demanded by indigenous peoples, the Company collected commercial intelligence on the commodity specifications that most appealed to these communities. Carlos and Lewis have shown that during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century the Company's officers compiled detailed reports on what Aboriginal peoples thought of the commodities that the Company offered for sale, which were then delivered to Hudson's Bay House.²¹⁹ Such information continued to be gathered after 1783. On occasion it was necessary to directly communicate this market intelligence to manufacturers. This was most notably the case for the knives and silver 'trinkets' that George Russell of Birmingham supplied to the Company. It is likely that at least one of the designs that Russell was asked to manufacture was based on a description of a scene that had been sent from Albany Factory to London in 1796.²²⁰ The order was for gorgets and asked that they be engraved 'to represent Albany (fort), two or three houses, some Indian tents and Indian Men and Women'.²²¹ Furthermore, on 4 May 1803, the Committee 'ordered a few silver earrings to be made according to the pattern sent from Albany by Mr Robert Goodwin'.²²² This again shows that the Company collected and responded to market information gathered in Hudson's Bay but it also suggests that the Company was still in the early stages of establishing the types of silver ornaments that would appeal to Aboriginal communities. The designs that Russell crafted onto the 'Indian knives' no doubt also derived from patterns sent from Hudson's Bay. In the case of haberdashery (particularly ribbons) and glass beads, the Company sent out pattern books so that the officers in Hudson's Bay could identify the styles that most appealed to indigenous peoples.²²³ For instance, on 28 January 1795, the Committee ordered 20lbs. of large black beads for York Factory on the recommendation of the post's master.²²⁴ Like Bowen has shown for the EIC then, the HBC was proficient at collecting commercial intelligence and actively used this information to direct its export procurement.²²⁵

²¹⁹ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 96-103.

²²⁰ Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 96; and HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 82.

²²¹ Quimby, *Indian Culture*, p. 96.

²²² HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 82.

²²³ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 123; and HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 49.

²²⁴ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 48.

²²⁵ Bowen, *Business of Empire*, p. 248.

IV. Conclusion

Unlike previous studies that have focused on the meanings that Aboriginal peoples in North America attached to certain commodities imported from Europe, this chapter has analysed how the discerning tastes of these communities shaped the HBC's supply network. The Company's search for high-quality commodity exports often led the Company to form close, long-lasting relationships with a wide range of tradespeople who proved themselves capable of meeting the intricate demands of the fur trade. In the case of the Company's woollen cloth — the principal export to Hudson's Bay — the Company relied upon the connections of London cloth factors to source high-quality textiles. In other cases, the Company moved beyond the capital and established direct connections with provincial manufacturers in Birmingham and Witney to ensure that its knives, silver ornaments, and blankets were suitable for the fur trade. The Company also established contacts with overseas merchants in Lisbon in order to guarantee a supply of high-quality Brazil tobacco. The Company's guns, kettles, and other metal products seemingly came direct from manufacturers rather than intermediaries, which was in part necessitated by the need to adapt these goods to the challenging sub-arctic temperatures of Hudson's Bay. For each of the Company's exports, these commodity specifications were informed by market intelligence gathered in Hudson's Bay and relayed to Fenchurch Street. While the Company continued to use London intermediaries to source its woollen broadcloth, whereas the Canada merchants were apparently more receptive to the new merchant-manufacturers, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Company did move away from the West Country textile industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century and towards the more innovative Yorkshire manufacturers. In contrast to the EIC, therefore, the HBC was not inclined to support ailing parts of the British textile industry after 1800, no doubt because the Company had no need for manufacturers to help defend the Company's Charter or since the Yorkshire woollen industry — through its participation in the Anglo-American trade — was better placed to meet the exact specifications that the fur trade required than was the case in the trade to Asia.

The reason why British merchants and manufacturers did not seek to end the HBC's Charter in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was largely because the market that the fur trade provided for British manufactures was so small. Yet, the fact that the HBC and Canada merchants provided British merchants and manufacturers with effective access to the fur trade was another reason why these groups did not call for trade

reform. Indeed, in the early nineteenth century, British manufacturers challenged the EIC's monopoly precisely because they believed that they could better access the Indian market through an open trade. In the case of the fur trade, therefore, there was an absence of a key agent of change that could have campaigned for an end of the HBC's Charter, or against the emergence of monopoly in the trade in 1821.

A Metropolitan Monopoly: Auctions and Re-exports

This chapter shifts the analytical focus to the metropolitan auctions at which the HBC and the so-called ‘Canada merchants’ sold their furs and the impact of the auction sales on the fortunes of the HBC and NWC. British and foreign brokers, furriers, hatters, and other manufacturers gathered in these salerooms to bid on lots of the many different types of North Atlantic furs. The diverse and ever-changing fashions for fur-using apparel across Britain, Europe, and Asia, meant that each type of fur had its own distinct market. As was shown in chapter two, Britain’s colonies in North America supplied large volumes of furs that, for the most part, far surpassed domestic demand. In consequence, London was a major entr pot for the fur trade. However, dependence on the re-export trade exposed the HBC and the Canada merchants to the dislocations that the French and Napoleonic Wars brought to international trade.

Unfortunately, little is known about the distribution and sale of furs in London during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The most detailed exploration of this part of the commodity trade has been provided by E. E. Rich in his classic two-volume history of the HBC. Despite the book’s focus on the HBC, Rich provides a more thorough discussion of the NWC’s fur sales, such as the closed private deals with German furriers and the so-called ‘Adventure to China’, whereby furs were clandestinely exported from Montreal to Canton via New York.¹ While Rich’s study provides a wealth of information, the metropolitan aspect of the fur trade appears only as an appendage to the grand narrative of the struggle between the two companies in North America. Ann Carlos has also considered the two companies’ sales mechanisms and has provided a more extensive quantitative assessment of the revenues they provided.² Whereas Carlos’s analysis sheds much light on the HBC’s fur sales between 1804 and 1821, her hypothesis that the HBC’s contractual use of the London market placed it at a disadvantage to the

¹ For instance, see Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 190-2, 201-2, 206-11.

² See Carlos, *Duopoly*, especially pp. 100-8.

NWC — whose trade was supposedly more flexible and depended upon a more diverse array of markets — is questionable.³ The extant literature has not considered in detail whether differences between the two companies' sales network had any bearing upon the extension of the HBC's Charter in 1821. Did the sales strategies pursued by the two companies, and the structure of the distribution networks established to enact these approaches, enable one concern to better navigate the wartime disruption to international markets? Were the buyers of the companies' furs satisfied with the sales process and is there any evidence to suggest that they pressured the two establishments to cease their rivalry? Why, despite the rise of the British outports, did the fur trade remain a metropolitan monopoly?

The chapter seeks an answer to these questions over three sections. The first uses re-export data in the British customs' records to establish the scale and composition of the British re-export trade in furs, and these figures are combined with import data to ascertain the demand for furs in the British domestic market.⁴ This analysis shows that while the Napoleonic Wars set in motion a profound and enduring decline in the British re-export trade in furs, the Hudson's Bay and Montreal fur trades were, at the very least, equally disadvantaged by the wartime disruption to European markets. In fact, due to the scale of its trade, and thus its dependence on the re-export trade, it is likely that the NWC was actually more exposed to market instability. The second section explores the sale and distribution networks established by the two companies. The HBC sold its furs solely on the London market in a routine way that was transparent to buyers. On the other hand, the London Houses that sold the NWC's furs, while initially committed to the use of public sales, increasingly moved towards concluding private deals with large-scale furriers from the 1790s onwards. While the extant literature views the NWC's loose and flexible business networks as a boon to the Company, it is argued here that this system, like the HBC's open auctions, emerged because of the scale of the two concerns' trade and did not necessarily reward either enterprise with a particular advantage. The final section sheds light on the metropolitan buyers of furs, primarily through the use of the HBC's sales accounts.⁵ Analysis of these account books reveals that the re-export trade in furs

³ Ibid., p. 107.

⁴ TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21; CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1812-21; CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries*, 1809-21; and CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808.

⁵ HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

was dominated by a few large-scale German furriers. The role of two London livery companies — the Feltmakers' Company and the Skinners' Company — whose members were heavily involved in the treating of furs and the manufacture of fur-related apparel, is also examined. There is little evidence that any of these groups were dissatisfied with either the HBC's or Canada merchants' conduct of the fur trade. The absence of discontent amongst the companies' buyers suggests that open competition on the London market between the Hudson's Bay and Montreal fur trades helped the HBC to avoid criticism and thus helped facilitate the maintenance of the Company's Charter.

I. The Re-Export Trade

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a volatile period for British overseas trade. War in Europe and America caused considerable distress for many firms involved in Atlantic commerce and the difficulties were probably greater for those merchants engaged in the Baltic, Mediterranean, and North Sea trades. The protracted conflict ruined many mercantile fortunes and, while overseas trade swiftly recovered following news of decisive military victories or the restoration of peace, two decades of near-perpetual warfare initiated a long-term increase in British domestic demand for particular types of furs. Many of the furs imported via Hudson's Bay and Canada were largely destined for use in overseas markets. Usually furs were exported in their raw or 'undressed' state, meaning that the skins had not yet been processed into a form that was suitable for manufacture into articles of apparel.⁶ From 1783 to 1821, the official value of foreign and colonial 'undressed furs' re-exported from Britain averaged £59,259 each year, whereas the value of the 'dressed furs' re-exported was only £2,666.⁷ In addition, the value of British 'undressed furs' annually re-exported was only £2,826.

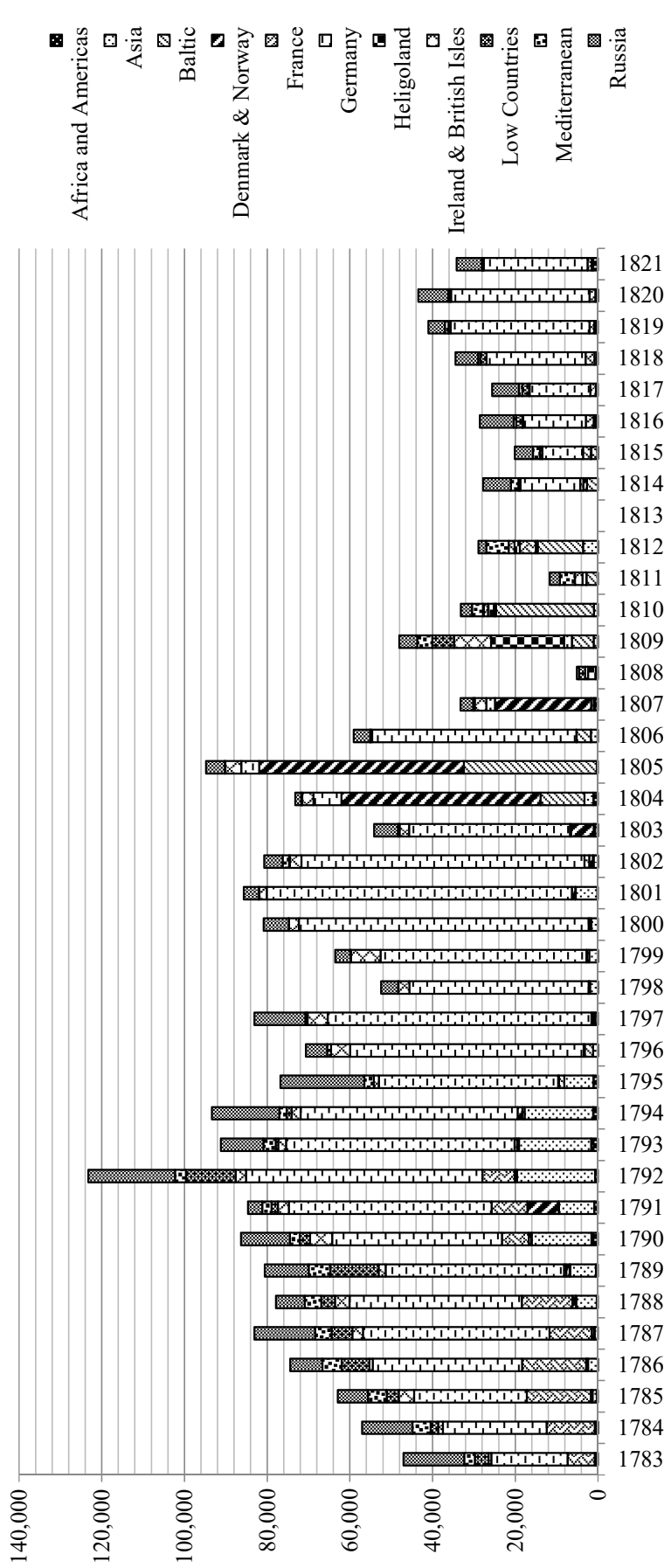
Figure 4.1 shows the annual official value of undressed furs re-exported from Britain to all parts of the world. The graph clearly shows that British fur re-exports declined over the period but the decrease in trade only became permanent after 1806. From 1783 to 1794 re-exports steadily increased and they were particularly high in 1792 when they amounted to an official value of £123,000.⁸ Between 1795 and 1806

⁶ Henry Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals in Nature and in Commerce* (London: Gurney & Jackson, 1892), pp. xlv-xlvii.

⁷ These figures discount livestock skins, swan skins, and dogfish. Calculated from TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-21*; and CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*.

⁸ See Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Annual official value of undressed furs re-exported from Britain to all parts of the world by destination, 1783-1821 (in £).



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'Baltic' category includes re-exports to Poland, Prussia, and Sweden. 'British Isles' includes Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Jersey. Re-exports to Gibraltar, Italy, Malta, Portugal & Madeira, Spain & Canaries, and Turkey are contained in the 'Mediterranean' category. The aggregate official values consist of the following furs: badger, bear, beaver, calabar, cat, chinchilla, coney, deer, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, fox tails, hare, leopard, lion, newtre, martin, mink, musquash, panther, otter, raccoon, seal, squirrel, tiger, weasel, wolf, wolverine, and other skins. Specific mention of livestock skins, swan skins, and dogfish were discounted.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-21*.

fluctuations in re-exports were more pronounced but the volume of trade was usually around £60,000. Re-exports were especially low after 1806, when Napoleon's Continental Blockade severely hampered British overseas trade, and the trade did not recover to pre-1806 levels following the signing of peace in 1815. Figure 4.1 also delineates the countries and regions to which the furs were re-exported. By far the most important market for re-exports was 'Germany'. While Germany was yet to emerge as a nation state, the British customs' records used this label to refer to the many territories of the Holy Roman Empire and, after the Congress of Vienna (1815), the German Confederation. When access to this principal market was impeded during the Napoleonic Wars, Poland, Prussia, and Sweden (referred to as the 'Baltic' in Figure 4.1), Denmark and Norway, and the small island of Heligoland in the North Sea were used as alternative routes through which to access blockaded markets. Re-exports to Russia remained important throughout the whole period, although they were much smaller than those to Germany. Asia (China) was also a major market in certain years, especially in 1788-95, 1801, and 1812. France absorbed an official value of over £15,000 in 1785 and 1786, but re-exports did not return to these levels after the war.

Overall averages of the annual official values which are contained in Table 4.1 show that Germany received 55 per cent (£31,952) of the total re-exports. Germany's share of re-exports peaked at 85 per cent (£61,084) in 1798-1802 and they came close to this proportion again in 1818-21 when they comprised 76 per cent (£29,019). On average, 12 per cent (£7,185) of re-exports were shipped to Russia. One quarter (£6,435) of the re-exports went to Russia in 1814-7 and this was the largest share of re-exports to this market over the period. Around 5 per cent of re-exports were each sent to Asia, the Baltic, Denmark and Norway, France, and Ireland, although it was more often the case that very low volumes were conveyed to these destinations. Re-exports to the Low Countries and Mediterranean were exceptionally small.

It is evident from this initial survey of the re-export data that German agents played a critical role in the British fur trade at this time. Several German towns performed key intermediary functions for the trade. Hamburg served as the main port through which furs were distributed to the inland commercial centres of Frankfurt and Leipzig and both of these interior cities hosted seasonal trade fairs where large volumes of furs were

Table 4.1. Average annual official value of undressed furs re-exported from Britain to all parts of the world by destination, 1783-1821 (in £).

	Asia	Baltic	Denmark & Norway	France	Germany	Ireland & British Isles	Low Countries	Mediterranean	Russia	Other	Total
1783-7	880 (1%)	263 (0%)	304 (0%)	11,889 (18%)	30,395 (47%)	1,781 (3%)	3,937 (6%)	4,056 (6%)	11,336 (17%)	76 (0%)	64,917
1788-92	10,615 (12%)	6 (0%)	2,082 (2%)	7,148 (8%)	46,413 (51%)	3,129 (3%)	6,220 (7%)	3,286 (4%)	10,775 (12%)	809 (1%)	90,541
1793-7	8,553 (10%)	885 (1%)	477 (1%)	121 (0%)	54,277 (65%)	2,944 (4%)	438 (1%)	1,646 (2%)	12,840 (15%)	825 (1%)	83,006
1798-1802	2,375 (3%)	315 (0%)	413 (1%)	235 (0%)	61,084 (85%)	3,374 (5%)	42 (0%)	361 (0%)	4,380 (6%)	55 (0%)	72,634
1803-7	1,012 (2%)	9,432 (15%)	25,297 (40%)	58 (0%)	20,302 (32%)	2,393 (4%)	96 (0%)	150 (0%)	3,755 (6%)	392 (0%)	62,887
1808-12	1,099 (4%)	8,609 (34%)	125 (0%)	854 (3%)	571 (2%)	2,774 (11%)	1,385 (5%)	3,184 (13%)	2,264 (9%)	4,511 (18%)	25,376
1814-7	21 (0%)	1,278 (5%)	252 (1%)	1,480 (6%)	13,556 (53%)	90 (0%)	1,017 (4%)	1,231 (5%)	6,435 (25%)	151 (1%)	25,511
1818-21	55 (0%)	437 (1%)	0 (0%)	1,443 (4%)	29,019 (76%)	196 (1%)	423 (1%)	530 (1%)	5,693 (15%)	483 (1%)	38,279
Overall Average	3,076 (5%)	2,660 (5%)	3,619 (6%)	2,904 (5%)	31,952 (55%)	2,085 (4%)	1,695 (3%)	1,806 (3%)	7,185 (12%)	913 (2%)	57,895

Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'Baltic' category includes re-exports to Poland, Prussia, and Sweden. 'British Isles' includes Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Jersey. Re-exports to Gibraltar, Italy, Malta, Portugal & Madeira, Spain & Canaries, and Turkey are contained in the 'Mediterranean' category. 'Other' includes Africa, the Americas, and Heligoland. The aggregate official values consist of the following furs: badger, bear, beaver, calabar, cat, chinchilla, coney, deer, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, fox tails, hare, leopard, lion, newtre, martin, mink, musquash, panther, otter, raccoon, seal, squirrel, tiger, weasel, wolf, wolverine, and other skins. Specific mention of livestock skins, swan skins, and dogfish were discounted.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-21*.

exchanged.⁹ With three rendezvous each year, the Leipzig Fair was the more important and these took place at New Year, Easter, and Michaelmas.¹⁰ Indeed, Leipzig first developed into the European centre of the fur trade in the fifteenth century and retained this importance well into the twentieth century.¹¹ With this well-established system of trade, German merchants would have had their own extensive European networks with which to subvert Napoleon's Continental Blockade. At Leipzig, furs from North America were sold alongside those trapped in Siberia but by the end of the eighteenth century the Russian fur trade largely served the Chinese market.¹² In effect, therefore, German and Russian intermediaries allowed the HBC and Canada merchants to bypass the EIC's monopoly of the trade to Canton. In addition to Leipzig, Saxony was also home to the furriers of Weissenfels who were well-known for their skill in dressing beaver, cat, muskrat (known to contemporaries as musquash), and squirrel skins.¹³ There were no doubt several other German principalities that developed their own specialised manufacturing industries to process undressed furs.

The customs' ledgers individually recorded the re-export of each fur type, which allows for a more detailed analysis of market demand for furs. Figure 4.2 shows the annual official value of the principal furs re-exported from Britain to all parts of the world. The graph reveals that the decline in the trade of deer was the central reason for the fall in re-exports over the period.¹⁴ After 1783, deer re-exports increased substantially and routinely reached an official value of over £30,000 at the turn of the nineteenth century. Re-exports peaked at £45,456 in 1805 but in 1806 they totalled over £20,000 for the final time. Thereafter, British deer re-exports rapidly declined. US merchants may have expanded and carried on their own deer trade to Europe after this date but worsening Anglo-American relations and Napoleon's Continental Blockade no doubt severely restricted such an endeavour. Decline in the re-export trade was not limited to deer however. Few beaver were re-exported after 1795 and the trade in bear dropped off around 1806. Marten and mink were always a major part of the re-export trade but there

⁹ A letter from McTavish, Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher specifically mentions the arranging of a public auction so that the furs would be able to make the 'Leipzig Fair'. See 'McTavish, Fraser & Co. to McTavish, Frobisher & Co.' 1 February 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fos. 5-6. Also see Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. liv-lvi.

¹⁰ Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, p. liv.

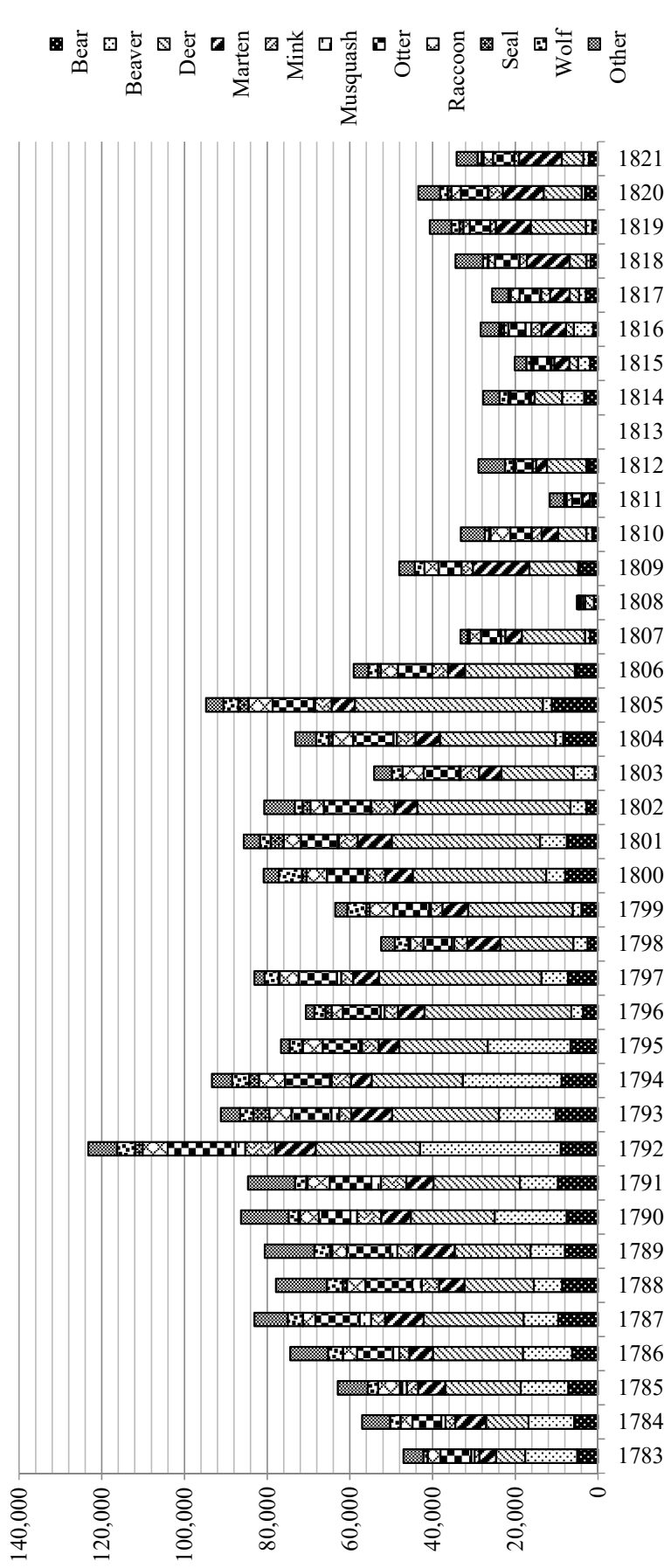
¹¹ Fisher, *Russian Fur Trade*, pp. 15, 196-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9; and Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 83-4.

¹³ Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. xlvi-xlvii.

¹⁴ See chapter two for a discussion of the decline of the deer trade.

Figure 4.2. Annual official value of undressed furs re-exported from Britain to all parts of the world by fur type, 1783-1821 (in £).



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'other' category includes the following furs: badger, calabar, cat, chinchilla, coney, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, fox tails, hare, leopard, lion, newtre, panther, squirrel, tiger, weasel, wolverine, and other skins. Specific mention of livestock skins, swan skins, and dogfish were discounted.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-1821*.

Table 4.2. Average annual official value of undressed furs re-exported from Britain to all parts of the world by fur type, 1783-1821 (in £).

	Bear	Beaver	Deer	Marten	Mink	Musquash	Otter	Raccoon	Seal	Wolf	Other	Total
1783-7	6,786 (10%)	11,080 (17%)	16,285 (25%)	6,619 (10%)	2,411 (4%)	1,441 (2%)	6,868 (11%)	3,526 (5%)	32 (0%)	2,647 (4%)	7,223 (11%)	64,918
1788-92	8,608 (10%)	15,148 (17%)	20,307 (22%)	7,837 (9%)	5,550 (6%)	2,080 (2%)	11,176 (12%)	4,784 (5%)	804 (1%)	3,423 (4%)	10,824 (12%)	90,541
1793-7	7,304 (9%)	13,394 (16%)	28,812 (35%)	6,510 (8%)	3,548 (4%)	933 (1%)	9,623 (12%)	4,727 (6%)	1,635 (2%)	3,303 (4%)	3,192 (4%)	82,981
1798-1802	4,967 (7%)	4,096 (6%)	29,632 (41%)	6,904 (10%)	4,075 (6%)	356 (0%)	9,067 (12%)	4,237 (6%)	1,483 (2%)	3,607 (5%)	4,208 (6%)	72,632
1803-7	5,518 (9%)	2,141 (3%)	26,550 (42%)	4,998 (8%)	3,573 (6%)	289 (0%)	8,286 (13%)	4,550 (7%)	860 (1%)	2,359 (4%)	3,766 (6%)	62,890
1808-12	2,013 (8%)	554 (2%)	6,161 (24%)	4,499 (18%)	1,354 (5%)	24 (0%)	3,486 (14%)	1,967 (8%)	196 (1%)	1,143 (5%)	3,978 (16%)	25,375
1814-7	2,332 (9%)	3,665 (14%)	3,211 (13%)	3,837 (15%)	1,370 (5%)	476 (2%)	4,482 (18%)	877 (3%)	429 (2%)	1,016 (4%)	3,765 (15%)	25,460
1818-21	2,122 (6%)	1,179 (3%)	7,956 (21%)	9,776 (26%)	1,904 (5%)	64 (0%)	5,629 (15%)	1,907 (5%)	625 (2%)	1,473 (4%)	5,553 (15%)	38,188
Overall	4,956 (9%)	6,407 (11%)	17,364 (30%)	6,373 (11%)	2,973 (5%)	708 (1%)	7,327 (13%)	3,322 (6%)	758 (1%)	2,371 (4%)	5,314 (9%)	57,873

Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'other' category includes the following furs: badger, calabar, cat, chinchilla, coney, elk, ermine, fisher, fox, fox tails, hare, leopard, lion, newt, panther, squirrel, tiger, weasel, wolverine, and other skins. Specific mention of livestock skins, swan skins, and dogfish were discounted.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-21*.

was no notable increase in the volumes of the former at the end of the period, despite the growth in marten imports as was formerly documented in chapter two.

The re-export data make clear that deer made up the largest share of the fur re-exports (Table 4.2). On average each year, an official value of £17,364 deer was re-exported, which accounted for 30 per cent of all undressed fur re-exports. Otter was the second highest at £7,327 (13 per cent), followed by beaver at £6,407 (11 per cent) and marten at £6,373 (11 per cent). The share of the re-export trade made up by beaver, deer, and marten varied most, and the others remained largely stable over the period.¹⁵ Despite the decline in trade, the share of deer in the fur re-export trade was always high. Deer composed around 40 per cent of re-exports between 1793 and 1807 before returning to pre-1793 levels in 1808-21 (around 20 per cent). Beaver's share of the trade was around 17 per cent between 1783 and 1797 before subsequently falling to around 4 per cent for the rest of the period, excepting a temporary improvement in 1814-7. In addition, re-exports of marten became more important after 1808 and constituted over one-quarter of total re-exports in 1818-21.¹⁶ In fact marten, alongside the always small re-export of seal, were the only two furs that were re-exported in larger quantities at the end of the period than at the beginning. In 1783-7, the official value of the martens re-exported totalled £6,619. By the end of the period, the value was almost one-third higher at £9,776.¹⁷ All other fur re-exports decreased: musquash (by 96 per cent), beaver (89 per cent), bear (69 per cent), deer (51 per cent), raccoon (46 per cent), wolf (44 per cent), other (23 per cent), mink (21 per cent), and otter (18 per cent).¹⁸ In essence, 1788-1802 were the peak years of the British re-export trade in furs and all but the trade in marten and seal declined over the period.

Of course the re-export trade in undressed furs was heavily influenced by the demand for furs within the British home market, which helped to shape several of the key characteristics of the re-export trade. Table 4.3 shows the average annual number of the main furs that were imported into Britain and retained for domestic use. Analysis of these retained imports reveals new insights into the scale and scope of British domestic demand for furs. Of the 11 types of fur listed in Table 4.3, four were largely for use within Britain. These were seal, beaver, deer, and musquash. While the Hudson's Bay and Montreal fur

¹⁵ See Table 4.2.

¹⁶ See Table 4.2.

¹⁷ See Table 4.2.

¹⁸ Calculated from data contained in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3. Average annual number of the main undressed furs imported into Britain and retained for domestic use, 1783-1821 .

	Bear	Beaver	Deer	Fox	Marten	Mink	Musquash	Otter	Raccoon	Seal	Wolf
1783-7	2,095 (12%)	105,509 (69%)	313,488 (70%)	10,741 (54%)	10,041 (13%)	3,495 (12%)	40,861 (23%)	8,071 (26%)	20,075 (16%)	86,645 (99%)	2,279 (21%)
1788-92	3,071 (13%)	141,279 (69%)	246,448 (65%)	31,874 (81%)	-1,418 (-2%)	3,602 (6%)	-2,767 (-1%)	-556 (-2%)	19,985 (12%)	190,506 (94%)	439 (4%)
1793-7	5,546 (24%)	150,716 (73%)	242,704 (56%)	25,069 (78%)	-7,989 (-13%)	1,148 (3%)	-11,247 (-14%)	-1,433 (-5%)	-585 (0%)	181,222 (89%)	210 (2%)
1798-1802	21,932 (65%)	165,122 (91%)	293,574 (60%)	11,934 (28%)	-7,286 (-11%)	3,141 (7%)	13,117 (28%)	1,670 (5%)	15,561 (11%)	177,260 (89%)	19,690 (62%)
1803-7	18,382 (58%)	109,046 (92%)	212,540 (56%)	149 (1%)	8,898 (14%)	-199 (-1%)	52,553 (65%)	-4,627 (-20%)	3,348 (3%)	224,347 (95%)	0 (0%)
1808-12	3,632 (43%)	148,745 (98%)	165,250 (80%)	5,386 (46%)	-7,258 (-17%)	-4,625 (-46%)	43,708 (94%)	1,869 (14%)	8,177 (12%)	221,521 (99%)	2,188 (36%)
1814-7	2,068 (27%)	84,403 (85%)	43,752 (67%)	3,583 (19%)	48,752 (54%)	4,204 (22%)	254,869 (83%)	2,772 (16%)	17,829 (40%)	200,664 (97%)	5,369 (61%)
1818-21	2,641 (35%)	96,605 (95%)	54,474 (51%)	3,547 (13%)	60,523 (36%)	9,246 (31%)	238,724 (97%)	0 (0%)	32,729 (36%)	348,391 (97%)	193 (4%)
Overall	7,421 (39%)	125,178 (82%)	196,529 (63%)	11,535 (43%)	13,033 (16%)	2,502 (7%)	78,727 (54%)	971 (4%)	14,640 (13%)	203,820 (95%)	3,796 (32%)

Notes: The quantities were calculated by comparing import and re-export data contained in the British customs' records. There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'other' category includes the following furs: badger, calabar, cat, chinchilla, coney, elk, ermine, fisher, fox tails, hare, leopard, lion, newtre, panther, squirrel, tiger, weasel, wolverine, and other skins. Specific mention of livestock skins, swan skins, and dogfish were discounted.

Source: TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*; TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-21*; and TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*.

trades did not supply much seal to Britain, it is important to note that British demand for this fur was exceptionally high.¹⁹ 95 per cent of the seal imported into Britain was retained for domestic use and the number of seal retained quadrupled over the period, rising from an annual average of 86,645 in 1783-7 to 348,000 in 1818-21.²⁰ Newfoundland and the 'South Whale Fishery' (the South Atlantic and Southern Pacific Oceans) supplied the vast majority of Britain's seal imports. In 1821, 242,000 seal were imported into Britain from Newfoundland, which comprised 43 per cent of all seal imports, and the southern fisheries accounted for another 36 per cent (205,000).²¹ Considering that seals are larger in size than beavers and the fact that sealskin was so highly esteemed by furriers, seal was evidently a hugely important fur on the British market at this time.²² The seal trade also continued to expand at a time when the continental furs imported from North America were in decline.

British demand for beaver was similarly high with over four-fifths used domestically. While the average annual quantity of retained beaver furs peaked in 1798-1802 at 165,000, the volume dipped below 100,000 in 1814-21.²³ From 1783 to 1797, around 70 per cent of the beaver was retained in Britain but after 1798 the share was routinely above 90 per cent.²⁴ This situation was in complete contrast to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when beaver imported into Britain was largely re-exported to Russia.²⁵ Indeed, when British, French, and Dutch merchants first started to acquire beaver from North America their home countries did not contain tradespeople who possessed the knowledge of how to separate beaver wool from the pelts' long guard hairs. A complex trading system thus emerged whereby beaver from the Atlantic trade was shipped to Russia for processing and then later exported back to Western Europe where the beaver wool was made into the latest fashions of beaver and felt hats. In the 1720s, this multilateral trade slowly withered away as the art of 'combing' the beaver wool from the pelt was acquired by French and British hatters.²⁶ Alongside the

¹⁹ No seals were imported from Hudson's Bay between 1783 and 1821, and for the same period, imports of seal from Canada only made up 3 per cent of the total quantity retained for domestic use. This percentage was calculated from data in TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1809-21; TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries*, 1809-1821; and CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808.

²⁰ See Table 4.3.

²¹ TNA, CUST 4/16, *Ledgers of imports under countries*, 1821.

²² Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. 192-4.

²³ See Table 4.3.

²⁴ See Table 4.3.

²⁵ See Rich, 'Russia', pp. 307-28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 327-8.

technological innovation of ‘carroting’, which is discussed in the next chapter, the conquest of New France in 1763 greatly aided the manufacture of beaver and felt hats in Britain by providing the industry with a ready supply of beaver fur and by limiting that available to French hatters.²⁷ The British hat industry was certainly a key reason why such a large share of British beaver imports were retained for domestic use.

On average, 63 per cent of the imported deer were retained from 1783-1821, apart from the blockade years (1808-12) when the proportion reached 80 per cent.²⁸ The total number of retained deer did fall over the period however. At their height in 1783-7, 313,000 of the imported deer were annually used in Britain but by the end of the period it was only 54,474.²⁹ Despite the fivefold reduction in the quantity retained, the fact that the proportion of deer used domestically did not generally change suggests that the demand for deerskin contracted not just in Britain but across Europe as a whole. This is probably because consumers began to favour cotton trousers over deerskin breeches after 1800, and sealskin as a material for slippers and other footwear.³⁰

Musquash was the final fur that was predominately used within Britain (54 per cent).³¹ It is difficult to estimate retained imports for this fur, as well as for marten, mink, otter, and raccoon in that calculated figures are negative, meaning that more was re-exported than was originally imported. There are several possible explanations. The first is that the customs’ data includes domestic sources of fur. This could not, however, account for the negative values for retained imports of musquash and raccoon as these were species that were exclusive to North America.³² Likewise, the European mink never colonised England.³³ Pine martens, stone martens, and otters were present in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England but as the figures in question run into several thousand it is unlikely that domestic trapping would account for the discrepancy.³⁴ For instance, the 11 years of data collected by Murray Lawson between the years 1700 and 1775 suggests that very few, if any, martens were exported from England.³⁵ Lawson’s data also shows that exports of English otter are unlikely to have distorted the figures as only 1,193

²⁷ On the process of ‘carroting’ see Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 21-2.

²⁸ See Table 4.3.

²⁹ See Table 4.3.

³⁰ Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, pp. 87-8; and Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 39, 87-8.

³¹ See Table 4.3.

³² Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. 150, 259-62.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-7, 143.

³⁵ Out of the 11 years stated between 1700 and 1775, Lawson’s tabulations only show exports of English martens in 1700 (50 martens) and 1725 (89 martens). See Lawson, *Fur*, p. 95.

English otters were, on average, exported each year during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century compared to 4,627 more otters being exported in 1803-7 than imported (Table 4.3).³⁶ It is, unfortunately, unclear as to whether Lawson's 'English' fur exports include Scottish exports. In the case of the small furs of marten, musquash, and mink, the discrepancy may be because of a private trade by the HBC's servants and ship captains.³⁷ For instance, in 1786 the Committee discovered that Captain John Richards had been smuggling furs into England.³⁸ Private trade by the HBC's employees cannot explain why the customs' data show that more raccoon was exported than imported however, as this trade was centred further south in the Great Lakes region. Considering that the Canadian fur trade was larger than the HBC's trade between 1783 and 1821, it seems unlikely that private trade by HBC servants would alter the conclusions drawn here.

These problems do not obscure the general pattern of trade for musquash furs. Prior to 1802, a maximum of 30 per cent of the imported furs were retained for domestic use. This changed after 1803 as both the share and volume of the retained musquash rose. By 1818-21, 97 per cent of the imported musquash was used in Britain and an average of 239,000 were retained each year as opposed to 40,861 in 1783-7.³⁹ It seems that these furs were primarily used to make felt for the hatting industry, as according to Henry Poland's late-nineteenth-century treatise on the furriers' craft, the first individual to have used musquash in the dressing of garments was his namesake Sir William Henry Poland (1797-1884).⁴⁰ Hatters in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may therefore have used musquash as a substitute for the declining supply of beaver, an assumption that is tested in the next chapter through an analysis of the surviving records of hat manufacturers.

In the case of the other furs, re-exports were greater than retained imports. None of these furs were used to make felt but were largely fashioned into other apparel such as boas, muffs, cloaks, and coats, or were used to trim the outer edges of garments or line their interiors. On average, around two-fifths of the fox and bear, and one-third of the

³⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

³⁷ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 102-3. On private trade by the HBC's servants also see Burley, *Servants*, pp. 144-51; and Gerhard Ens, 'The Political Economy of the "Private Trade" on the Hudson Bay: The Example of Moose Factory, 1741-1744', in Bruce G. Trigger, Toby Morantz, Lousie Dechene, eds., *Le Castor Fait Tout: Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1987), pp. 382-410.

³⁸ Burley, *Servants*, pp. 144-5.

³⁹ See Table 4.3.

⁴⁰ Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. 261-2.

wolf were retained. In total, retained imports of marten (16 per cent), raccoon, (13 per cent), mink (7 per cent), and otter (4 per cent) comprised much smaller shares. While this was not the case for otter, more of the marten, mink, and raccoon was retained towards the end of the period. Only 13 per cent of the marten was retained in 1783-7 but just over half was in 1814-7 and more than a third was in 1818-21.⁴¹ By the end of the period, the total number of martens used domestically was around five times higher than it had been in 1783-7. British demand for mink followed a similar pattern. Three times as many mink were retained in 1818-21 (9,246) as were in 1783-7 (3,495). The proportions retained in 1814-7 (22 per cent) and 1818-21 (31 per cent) were also greater than in 1783-7 (12 per cent). The trend for raccoon was near-identical to that of marten and mink. Most of the imported otter skins were re-exported elsewhere. Indeed, the peak in retained otter imports was in 1783-7 when they numbered 8,071. The beginning of the period was also when otter composed their greatest share of total imports (26 per cent).⁴²

Four key characteristics of the British demand for furs emerge from this survey of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first was the need for large volumes of beaver and musquash for the production of beaver and felt hats. Indeed, it is likely that Britain was the world's principal producer of these manufactures. Second, there was a high demand for sealskin, an article whose use expanded over the period. Seal-dressers emerged to prepare the imported seal and the dyeing part of this process became a British speciality.⁴³ Sealskin was used in the production of luxury clothing and accessories such as for slippers, muffs, and tippetts. Beaver was also used in this way. Third, the British market used a great quantity of deerskin for the making of men's breeches, although demand for this waned in the early nineteenth century. Finally, the demand for otter, marten, mink, and raccoon — all of which were used to make luxury accessories like muffs and tippetts — was small, although the demand for the latter three increased towards the end of the period.

It was, therefore, not only wartime disruption and the decline in the deer trade that resulted in the contraction of the re-export trade in furs. Rising British demand for particular types of fur reduced the number exported to foreign markets. But to which markets were the re-exported furs delivered to? Unsurprisingly Germany, as the principal intermediary market, took the largest proportion of most furs including three-quarters of

⁴¹ See Table 4.3.

⁴² See Table 4.3.

⁴³ Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, p. 178.

Table 4.4. Percentage of furs re-exported from Britain to overseas markets by fur type, 1783-1821 .

Bear	Beaver	Deer	Marten	Mink
Germany (38%) France (17%) Russia (16%) Denmark & Norway (13%) Low Countries (4%) Baltic (4%) Mediterranean (4%) Ireland & British Isles (3%) Other (0%)	Russia (49%) Asia (32%) Low Countries (5%) France (5%) Mediterranean (4%) Germany (2%) Africa & Americas (1%) Baltic (1%) Other (1%)	Germany (70%) Ireland & British Isles (8%) Baltic (7%) Denmark & Norway (5%) France (5%) Low Countries (3%) Heligoland (1%) Mediterranean (1%) Other (0%)	Germany (76%) Denmark & Norway (5%) Mediterranean (5%) Ireland & British Isles (4%) Baltic (3%) Russia (2%) Heligoland (2%) Low Countries (2%) Other (2%)	Germany (74%) Denmark & Norway (10%) Mediterranean (5%) France (4%) Baltic (3%) Low Countries (2%) Russia (1%) Heligoland (1%) Other (0%)
Musquash	Otter	Raccoon	Seal	Wolf
Germany (59%) Africa & Americas (13%) Russia (11%) Denmark & Norway (8%) France (5%) Low Countries (2%) Asia (1%) Baltic (1%) Other (0%)	Germany (54%) Russia (26%) Denmark & Norway (7%) Asia (6%) Baltic (4%) Low Countries (2%) France (1%) Heligoland (1%) Other (0%)	Germany (44%) Russia (23%) Denmark & Norway (12%) Baltic (8%) Mediterranean (4%) France (4%) Low Countries (2%) Africa & Americas (2%) Other (1%)	Asia (30%) Germany (23%) Ireland & British Isles (14%) Denmark & Norway (11%) Russia (6%) France (6%) Low Countries (6%) Baltic (3%) Other (1%)	Germany (70%) France (9%) Denmark & Norway (8%) Baltic (5%) Low Countries (3%) Ireland & British Isles (2%) Heligoland (2%) Russia (2%) Other (1%)

Notes: The percentages are based on the average annual number of each type of fur re-exported. The 'Baltic' category includes re-exports to Poland, Prussia, and Sweden. 'British Isles' includes Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and Jersey. Re-exports to Gibraltar, Italy, Malta, Portugal & Madeira, Spain & Canaries, and Turkey are contained in the 'Mediterranean' category.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-21*.

the re-exported deer, marten, mink, and wolf, as well as over half the fox, musquash, and otter (Table 4.4). Germany similarly took the majority of the re-exported bear (38 per cent) and raccoon (44 per cent).⁴⁴ Beaver, however, was conspicuously absent from the German fur consignments. Only 2 per cent of beaver re-exports were destined for Germany. Rather almost half the beaver re-exports were directly sent to Russia, which also took a significant share of otter (26 per cent), raccoon (23 per cent), and bear (16 per cent) re-exports.⁴⁵ Asia, through the Chinese port of Canton, accounted for a further 32 per cent of beaver re-exports and took the greatest share of the re-exported seal (30 per cent).⁴⁶

Due to differences in each fur's proportion of retained imports and re-exports, and the fact that the scale and scope of the furs imported from Hudson's Bay and Canada varied, the HBC and NWC were not equally exposed to fluctuations in the re-export trade. The greater size of the Montreal fur trade and its more diverse array of furs actually made the Canada merchants more susceptible to such disturbances. Table 4.5 shows the extent to which the Canadian and Hudson's Bay fur trades relied upon the re-export trade by showing the number of 'surplus imports' for each fur type. These surplus import values were calculated by subtracting the average annual quantity of each fur imported from either Hudson's Bay or Canada from the average annual number of retained imports. Using the surplus percentages contained in Table 4.5, it is evident that the Canada merchants were more susceptible to instabilities in the re-export trade. For all ten of the furs, the HBC's surplus percentages were lower than those for Canada, and the Company only generally imported more marten and otter than was absorbed by the domestic market. Leaving aside competition with the HBC or American traders, the Canada merchants' imports of bear, marten, mink, musquash, otter, raccoon, and wolf exceeded British demand, often by a large margin. For example, their import of bear was 68 per cent higher than the number used in Britain and they imported twice as many martens, three times as many mink, and six times the number of raccoon.⁴⁷ While this analysis of trade statistics is not a substitute for studying sales' data, which can be used to establish the qualities and market value of imported furs, it does show that the Canada merchants relied upon the demand for furs in overseas markets to a much greater extent than did the HBC.

⁴⁴ See Table 4.4.

⁴⁵ See Table 4.4.

⁴⁶ See Table 4.4.

⁴⁷ See Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Average annual percentage of surplus fur imports from Hudson's Bay and Canada by fur type, 1783-1821 .

	Bear	Beaver	Deer	Fox	Marten	Mink	Musquash	Otter	Raccoon	Wolf
<i>Canada</i>										
No. Imported	12,467	111,498	120,306	7,450	40,366	9,817	87,458	13,924	100,251	4,824
Surplus Imports	5,046	-13,680	-76,223	-4,085	27,333	7,315	8,731	12,953	85,611	1,028
Surplus Percentage	68%	-11%	-39%	-35%	210%	292%	11%	1,334%	585%	27%
<i>Hudson's Bay</i>										
No. Imported	577	33,102	2,299	5,500	27,250	1,212	30,026	3,809	639	3,680
Surplus Imports	-6,844	,92,076	-194,230	-6,035	14,217	-1,290	-48,701	2,838	-14,001	-116
Surplus Percentage	-92%	-74%	-99%	-52%	109%	-52%	-62%	292%	-96%	-3%

Notes: The surplus imports were calculated by subtracting the average annual quantity of each fur imported from either Hudson's Bay or Canada from the average annual number of retained imports as stated in Table 4.3.

Source: TNA, CUST 4/5-16, *Ledgers of imports under countries, 1809-21*; TNA, CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries, 1809-1821*; and TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*.

The Canada merchants' dependence upon the re-export trade casts doubt on Carlos's assertion that the HBC was disadvantaged by its obligation to sell furs on the open London market.⁴⁸ In actual fact, the HBC was under no such obligation. There was no clause in the Company's Charter that required the contractual sale of furs in London, and the temporary parliamentary ratification of the Charter in 1690-7 only required the Company to conduct two public auctions a year and to offer moderately-sized lots that valued between £100 and £200.⁴⁹ By the late eighteenth century, it is more accurate to say that there was an *expectation* that the Company would sell its fur at public auction in London. Indeed, from 1694 to 1713 the Company, in an attempt to break a close-knit buyers' ring and increase sales, contracted agents to directly sell some of the Company's furs in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Narva, and Archangel.⁵⁰ While the buyers' ring was broken, the profits did not meet expectations and were abandoned after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). From then on, the Company limited its sales to London.⁵¹ In contrast McTavish, Fraser, one of the London firms that sold the NWC's furs, did not have to meet such expectations and therefore were at greater liberty to make private deals with buyers or could ship their furs to alternative markets. Of course such actions might upset London buyers and risked making them more amenable to the HBC, but did the Canada merchants' greater flexibility actually give them an advantage over the chartered company?

There were, as the re-export and retained import analysis showed, four key markets where furs were in high demand: Britain, Germany, Russia, and Asia (China). Since the Canada merchants supplied more than the British market could absorb, they relied heavily upon the re-export trade to Europe and China. The Napoleonic Wars limited re-exports to Germany and Russia. So, if, as Carlos maintains, the NWC had greater flexibility over where it sold its furs, it would be reasonable to assume that China could have operated as a substitute for European outlets. In practice, however, Canton did not usually serve as an alternative market for a number of reasons. First, the Chinese market was largely for

⁴⁸ Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 100-8.

⁴⁹ See Anon., *Charter and Supplemental Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company* (London: Printed by Sir Joseph Causton & Sons, 1884), pp. 1-29; and Rich, 'Russia', p. 322.

⁵⁰ Rich, 'Russia', pp. 321-8.

⁵¹ Apart from two short-lived attempts to market furs in China, one in 1793 and the other in the early 1820s, both of which were arranged with the EIC. See Gough, 'Adventure to China', especially p. 314; and Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 28.

beaver, seal, and sea-otter.⁵² Apart from beaver, these were not furs that the Montreal fur trade provided in large quantities and the British demand for beaver was already high: what the NWC really needed was an alternative market for its copious volumes of marten, mink, and raccoon. Secondly, the EIC's monopoly of the China trade imposed excessive barriers on the implementation of a fur trade to China. Whereas the United States' merchants could trade freely to Canton, the licenses that the EIC granted to British subjects who wanted to export furs to the Celestial Empire contained multiple clauses that made such ventures unprofitable. Indeed, the NWC discovered this when it chartered, on its own account, the *Isaac Todd*, *Columbia*, and *Colonel Allan* to convey furs between Fort George (formerly Astoria) — the NWC's newly acquired outpost on the Pacific north-west coast — and Canton in the years 1813 to 1817.⁵³ The EIC's insistence that the proceeds from the sale of the NWC's furs in Canton had to be remitted using bills of exchange payable in London, rather than allow the fur-trading Company to purchase China goods, made a successful venture impossible.⁵⁴

The charting of the Pacific north-west coast of North America by James Cook's third voyage (1776-80) and the sale of sea-otter skins in Canton during the expedition, alerted British and American merchants to the Chinese demand for fur. As a result of the EIC's restrictions, the Canton-North-west coast trade soon fell into the hands of American merchants, a trade that became known as the 'golden round'.⁵⁵ From 1788 to 1795, however, an average of 38,272 beaver and 4,382 otter were exported from London to China each year.⁵⁶ Who exported these furs? Whereas the EIC purchased £500 worth of furs for its China trade from the HBC in 1793, there is no evidence that this joint-

⁵² For instance, see *Report [relative to the trade with the East Indies and China,] from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the means of extending and securing the foreign trade of the country, and to report to the House; together with the minutes of evidence taken in sessions 1820 and 1821, before the said committee* (P.P. 1821, Vol.VII.1), especially p. 187; and Gibson, *Otter Skins*, especially p. 54.

⁵³ On the NWC's 'Adventure to China' see O'Neil, 'Maritime Activities', pp. 243-67; Gough, 'Adventure to China', pp. 309-32; and Keith, 'Isaac Todd', pp. 566-97.

⁵⁴ Keith, 'Isaac Todd', p. 588.

⁵⁵ The 'golden round' usually started in Boston. From this port manufactures were shipped to the Pacific north-west coast of North America via Cape Horn where they were exchanged with Aboriginal peoples for furs. The voyage then navigated across the Pacific Ocean, stopping at the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) to refuel and procure other commodities like sandalwood. The venture then proceeded to Canton, where the furs and other commodities were sold and *chinoiserie* and teas were purchased. Sailing via the Cape of Good Hope, the ship then made its way back to Boston where the China goods were sold for a handsome profit. See Gibson, *Otter Skins*, especially pp. 22-61.

⁵⁶ Calculated using export data contained in TNA, CUST 17/10-7, *States of Navigation, Commerce and Revenue*, 1788-95.

enterprise was successful or that it was commissioned for a second time.⁵⁷ Indeed, the EIC's export trade to China in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was largely limited to a few select commodities traded in bulk such as copper, cottons, iron, lead, tin, and woollens.⁵⁸ Rather than the EIC's own direct trade, it appears that much of the fur exported from London to Canton was undertaken by individuals whom the Company had permitted to carry on a 'private trade' to China, although one characteristic of this trade was that it was subject to wide fluctuations.⁵⁹ It is also probable that Chinese and German merchants in London exported furs to Canton. Indeed, Rich noted that in 1793 a 'Mr Shyngua' purchased £33,000 worth of furs in London, although the source of this information is unclear.⁶⁰

With the exception of the years 1802 and 1803, it is known that the NWC sent some of its North American furs to Canton via American merchants between 1792 and 1808.⁶¹ While details are scarce after 1797, it has been established that Reid & Hamilton served as the Company's agents in New York and that Reid & Lennox acted as the Canton agents.⁶² The furs for this venture were smuggled from Montreal to New York with the assistance of John Jacob Astor, who is known to have purchased beaver from McTavish, Fraser on his visit to London in 1794.⁶³ The NWC's first venture into the China trade was, however, a dismal failure until at least 1794 if not thereafter. By this year the scheme, pushed solely by McTavish, Frobisher, had lost £23,000 and there were over 67,000 skins that remained unsold in Canton, a situation that was exacerbated by Chinese merchants buying on the London market as well as the German furriers Schneider & Co. placing an

⁵⁷ Included in the consignment were: 120 beaver, 179 marten, 50 otter, 45 cat, 10 silver fox, 27 cross fox, 50 red fox, 10 white fox, and 50 kitt fox. See HBCA, A.5/3, *London Correspondence Book Outwards — General*, 1788-96, fos. 166, 168-70. Also see HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 2-3, 15.

⁵⁸ See Earl H. Pritchard, 'Private Trade between England and China in the Eighteenth Century (1680-1833)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1957), pp. 108-37; Earl H. Pritchard, 'Private Trade between England and China in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1958), pp. 221-56; Bowen, 'Sinews', pp. 466-86; and Bowen, *Business of Empire*, pp. 246-52, 266.

⁵⁹ This included the Company's supercargoes, commanders, officers, and crew members, as well as other licensed individuals that consisted of Company stockholders, active or retired Company servants, and the extended network of the Company's shipping interest. See Pritchard, 'Private Trade' (1957), especially pp. 111-2, 130.

⁶⁰ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 206. Unfortunately, there are no surviving sales books in the HBC archives for the years 1790-5. Shyngua is mentioned in a letter from John Fraser to Simon McTavish. See 'John Fraser to Simon McTavish' 20 May 1795, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fos. 229-30.

⁶¹ Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 26. On the first voyage in 1792 see Campbell, *North West Company*, pp. 89-90.

⁶² See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 206; and W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 465.

⁶³ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 206, 210.

‘immense quantity of better skins’ on the Canton market.⁶⁴ In London, John Fraser of McTavish, Fraser who had always been opposed to the venture was enraged by Simon McTavish’s risk-taking.⁶⁵ Fraser later suspected that the best furs were being taken for the China venture, a decision that damaged the fortunes of the London house.⁶⁶ Overall, Gibson states that the NWC’s shipments to China annually averaged 36,822 pelts in 1792-6 and numbered between 20,000 and 25,000 in 1804-8.⁶⁷

While some of the furs procured on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains were sent east to the Pacific rather than west towards the Atlantic, the quantity of furs diverted from the traditional Montreal route was likely small. Indeed, while David Thompson brought 3,570 lbs. of large and small beaver and \$15,277 worth of miscellaneous furs across the Rockies for the *Isaac Todd’s* first voyage to China in 1813, 17,705 lbs. of parchment beaver and \$39,173 of miscellaneous furs were apparently sourced from the more immediate vicinity of the north-west coast.⁶⁸ While it is uncertain as to how many furs were sent over the Rockies, it is beyond doubt that furs were not shipped from London to the Pacific.⁶⁹ Persistent losses led the NWC to discontinue chartering vessels on its own account in 1817, by which time they had begun to utilise the services of J. & T. H. Perkins of Boston, the most senior New England firm in the China trade, and their sister house in Canton, J. & J. N. Perkins.⁷⁰ By using the American merchant firm as agents, the NWC was able to increase the viability of their fur trade to China as Perkins purchased return cargoes of tea and other China goods for resale in the United States and Europe; an arrangement that was far more profitable than the EIC’s remittances in the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 207; and Rich, *Montreal*, pp. 90-1. Evidently the source of this information originates from a letter between John Fraser and Simon McTavish. See ‘John Fraser to Simon McTavish’ 20 May 1795, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fos. 229-30. Earl H. Pritchard also noted that Canton became rapidly overstocked with furs. See Pritchard, ‘Private Trade’ (1957), p. 133.

⁶⁵ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 210-1; and ‘John Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher & Co.’ 14 December 1799, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fos. 344-5.

⁶⁶ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 207, 210-1.

⁶⁷ Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 584-5.

⁶⁹ On the sending of furs from London to the north-west coast, O’Neil, Gough, and Keith do not mention such a trade taking place and the British customs’ records do not list any export of skins to ‘Nootka Sound’. See O’Neil, ‘Maritime Activities’, pp. 243-67; Gough, ‘Adventure to China’, pp. 309-32; Keith, ‘Isaac Todd’; TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1812-21; and CUST 10/1-12, *Ledgers of exports of foreign and colonial merchandise under countries*, 1809-21.

⁷⁰ By the late 1820s, Perkins’ & Co. was worth \$3 million. See Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 57-8. On the NWC and Perkins’ see Gough, ‘Adventure to China’, p. 329; Keith, ‘Isaac Todd’, pp. 588-9; and O’Neil, ‘Maritime Activities’, p. 244.

form of bills of exchange and freight-money.⁷¹ However, due to the high charges imposed by the American firm, and the fact that the NWC did not include specie or other saleable commodities in its shipments to Canton, it is debatable that even this arrangement proved especially profitable for the Company.⁷²

In light of the difficulties that the NWC faced during the different incarnations of its 'adventure to China', it is doubtful that the Company derived notable advantages from its willingness to sell furs outside of the London market. The high prices that beaver, otter, and other types of furs could realise in Canton were a major motivating factor for the NWC's preoccupation with the China trade. Yet exporting furs to China was as competitive as trade to Europe. American and German exporters provided stiff competition in Canton, and Russian merchants — trading furs from Siberia and the coast of Alaska — lowered demand in northern China through their trade at Kyakhta and Tsurukhaitu on the Mongolian-Russian border.⁷³ Canton was therefore often overstocked with furs, and in several instances the realised prices did not cover the NWC's import costs. But profit was not the only reason why the NWC was so fixated on the China trade. Establishing a fur trade to China was an intrinsic part of the NWC's ambition of acquiring a Charter of its own; one that granted the Company exclusive rights to the Pacific north-west coast. Adventures to China and the *Columbia Enterprise* were the culmination of the Company's westward advance across the North American continent. Nonetheless, the Company's final frontier did not obey the economic realities imposed by the British mercantilist system or the fact that the chief demand for the Company's furs lay in Europe not China. While there were forays into the Pacific from the 1770s onwards, Britain's fur

⁷¹ The NWC's agreement with the Boston firm operated as follows: the NWC's London supply Houses purchased and shipped British manufacturers to Boston, from which the American firm dispatched an annual ship to convey the goods to Fort George, and then the *Columbia* pelts on to Canton where they were sold and the returns remitted to Boston in the form of China goods. For this service, Perkins' took one-quarter of the net proceeds and the NWC received the remaining share. See O'Neil, 'Maritime Activities', pp. 265-6. Also see Gough, 'Adventure to China', p. 329; and Keith, 'Isaac Todd', pp. 569-70, 588.

⁷² Prior to 1813, 75 per cent of the value of US imports into China was made up of specie and American merchants regularly augmented their trade with ginseng, sandalwood, and other commodities. See Keith, 'Isaac Todd', pp. 589-90.

⁷³ See James R. Gibson, 'The Russian Fur Trade', in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 217-30; and Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 12-8. On the Russian Empire's eighteenth-century fur trade with China also see Foust, *Muscovite and Mandarin*; and Gregory Afinogenov, 'Jesuit Conspirators and Russia's East Asian Fur Trade, 1791-1807', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2015), pp. 56-76.

trade would predominantly remain an Atlantic affair, as in most cases the Pacific was no substitute for shipment via the St. Lawrence River or Hudson's Bay.⁷⁴

II. *The Sales*

The extent to which the HBC and Canada merchants relied upon the re-export trade and their willingness to market their furs beyond the metropolitan economy was not the only difference between the two enterprises. The sale and distribution structures established by the two concerns varied. Whereas the HBC focused its efforts on the London market and remained committed to the use of public auctions, the Canada merchants were more inclined to bypass the capital entirely or to make private deals with furriers. Again, the Canada merchants' greater flexibility in the sales and distribution process could be viewed as an advantage over the HBC. In his study of Britain's eighteenth-century Levant trade, Ralph Davis concluded that when London merchants sold their return cargoes of silk outside of the open market by approaching potential purchasers they often achieved marginally higher prices.⁷⁵ Rather than purely an attempt to maximise sale revenue, however, the distribution mechanisms used by the HBC and Canada merchants evolved as a means to either satisfy buyers or shift particularly large volumes of furs.

After the return of the Company's ships between October and December each year, the HBC's warehousemen set about sorting the fur returns from their factories into suitably sized lots that were ready for public auction.⁷⁶ Apart from the occasional lot of sundry skins, each lot was made up of a single type of pelt and the total size of each lot varied according to the type of fur that was being sold. The largest lots were usually those for musquash, which ranged from 450 to 2,000 skins. Beaver was divided into three separate varieties: coat beaver, parchment beaver, and cub beaver. Coat beaver were beaver skins that had been softened through the addition of grease to the skin of the pelt, a process that was carried out in North America by Aboriginal peoples through their wearing of the skins.⁷⁷ Parchment beaver were pelts that had only been dried in the sun — a process completed before they were traded — and cub beaver was used to describe the skins of juvenile beaver and particularly small pelts.⁷⁸ Coat and cub beaver were sized

⁷⁴ Gough, 'Adventure to China', p. 330.

⁷⁵ This is possibly because the approached buyers were more interested in purchasing small lots of silk at a time and not the large lots offered at public auctions. See Davis, *Devonshire Square*, pp. 170-1.

⁷⁶ HBCA, C.4/1, *Ships' Movements Book*, 1719-1929, fos. 13-19.

⁷⁷ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 20.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20; and Lamb, *Alexander McKenzie*, p. 463.

into lots ranging from between 200 to 450 and 200 to 400 respectively, and those of parchment beaver were usually larger at between 200 and 600, although sometimes they totalled over 1,000. Marten ranged from 50 to 500 and kitt fox — one of the most common fox species — from 100 to 500. The lots of other furs were usually smaller and did not generally exceed a total of 220 skins.⁷⁹ This analysis of lot sizes is derived from data contained in the Company's sale books, which only provide a partial coverage of the period before 1810, but surviving auction catalogues for the 1821-2 sales show that the sizes did not change.⁸⁰ In addition to different varieties of a specific fur, there were a number of terms used to denote the quality of the lot. These included 'fine', 'heavy', 'small', 'ordinary', 'low stage', 'damaged', and 'damaged and staged'.⁸¹

Each year the Company sold its furs over the course of several auctions that took place between December and June. The majority of the sales were made in January and March. The former accounted for 26 per cent (£147,000) of the revenue listed in the sales books and the latter for 29 per cent (£168,000).⁸² Many sales were also conducted in February (£65,706), April (£74,348), and May (£68,175), whereas little was sold in December (£31,972) or June (£20,245). The sale year did not consist of monthly auctions, rather there were usually only three or four months in which they took place. For instance, in the 1799-1800 sale year, there were auctions in December, February, and April. There was no set rule for the month in which a particular fur was offered for sale. Instead, the HBC Committee determined the contents of their sales according to current market conditions. Once the Committee had decided upon a sale date, the auction was advertised in the London press, a notice was hung up at the Royal Exchange, and sale catalogues were drawn up, printed, and made available to interested buyers.⁸³ Prior to the sale, the offered lots were made available for inspection at the Company's warehouse.⁸⁴ The

⁷⁹ The lot sizes of the other main furs ranged between the following: black bear from 10 to 80, white bear (20 to 100), cat (30 to 110), cross fox (1 to 60), red fox (20 to 100), silver fox (5 to 50), white fox (15 to 100), otter (30 to 160), and wolf (20 to 220). Compiled from HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

⁸⁰ HBCA, A.54/2-15, *Auction Catalogues of Fur Trade Produce*, 1821-2.

⁸¹ All of these terms were listed in the sale books apart from 'low stage' and 'heavy'. The latter two can be seen in the sale catalogues as handwritten additions that were presumably taken during the sale itself. For instance, see HBCA, A.54/5, *Auction Catalogues of Fur Trade Produce*, 1822.

⁸² These values include the 5 or 2.5 per cent discounts offered for prompt payment.

⁸³ 500 catalogues were usually printed. See HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 15. On the use of the Royal Exchange see HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 28.

⁸⁴ This is probably the 'preamble' mentioned in the Company's minute books. See HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 8. The Company's advertisements in the London press also occasionally mentioned that the lots could 'be seen at their warehouse till the time of sale'. See *Morning Chronicle*, 25 February 1800. The Company sold its warehouse at Radcliffe Cross in 1806 on account of it being

auctions were conducted in the sale room of Hudson's Bay House and were sold 'by the candle'.⁸⁵ In the initial years of the Company's trade, sales were conducted at a London coffee house but from 1692 onwards the auctions were increasingly managed from the Company's own premises.⁸⁶ Buyers were, at least between 1783 and 1811, offered a discount for prompt payment and the deadline or so-called 'Prompt Day' was usually one month after the auction.⁸⁷ Most purchasers took advantage of this discount and paid within the one month deadline. Until March 1787, the discount offered was 5 per cent but in this month the amount was reduced to 2.5 per cent.⁸⁸ The Company did not offer credit to its buyers; furs remained in the Company's warehouse until they were paid for.⁸⁹ The Company did, however, extend the payment period upon request, although 5 per cent interest was charged for this service and the furs remained in the Company's warehouse at the risk and hazard of the purchaser.⁹⁰ The way in which the Company conducted its sales thus ensured a reliable income and minimised credit.

Analysis of the data in the Company's sale books show that the 1790s saw an increase in the Company's sales revenue. From 1782-3 to 1785-6 the Company received an average of £24,500 each year from its auctions (Figure 4.3).⁹¹ By 1786-7 to 1787-8, the sales had increased to around £37,000. Sales were higher still between 1796-7 and 1799-1800 when the average annual returns totalled £61,473.⁹² While there are few sale books after 1800, Carlos's analysis of the sales revenue listed in the Company's grand ledgers can be used as a measure of how the Company's sales performed in the early

of 'no further use to the Company'. This was the Company's last warehouse outside of Fenchurch Street. See HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fos. 6, 23.

⁸⁵ Selling 'by the candle' was a routine way in which auctions were conducted in the eighteenth century. At the start of such an auction, a candle was lit upon the calling of the starting price for the lot. Bidding took place as the candle burned and the lot was sold to whoever held the highest bid when the candle snuffed out. See Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company, Vol 1*, p. 68.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁸⁷ Analysis of the Company's sale books for the period of this study show that discounts for prompt payment were offered between 1783 and 1810. The final reference to the setting of the 'Prompt Day' in the Company's minute books was in 1811. See HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fo. 20. Unsold furs were put up for sale at a 'Clearance Day' a month after the prompt day. See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 120.

⁸⁸ HBCA, A.1/46, *London Minute Book*, 1783-8, fo. 116.

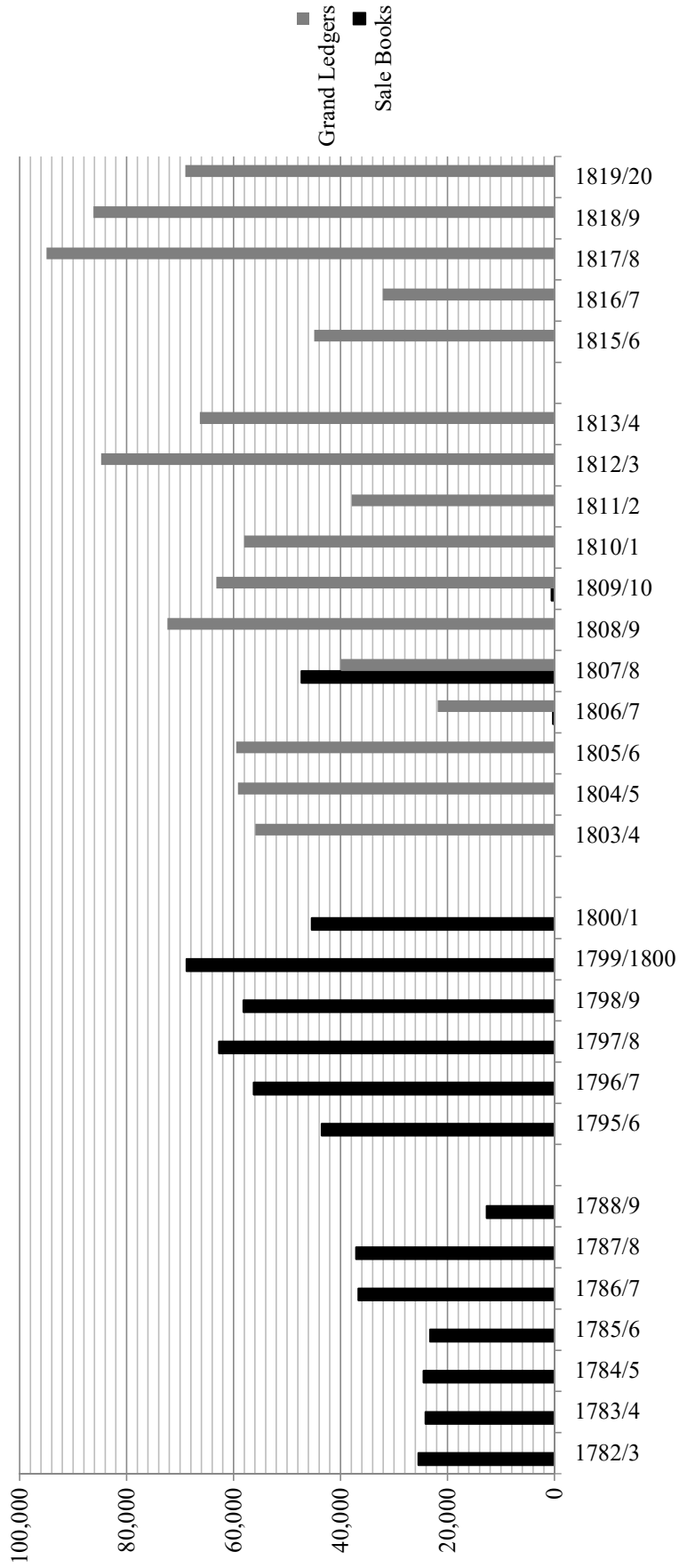
⁸⁹ It does appear, however, that the Company did extend at least some credit to its chief warehousemen, such as to John Peter Webber who was removed from his post in November 1795 after failing to pay his debts to the Company. See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 63. Webber was apparently later reinstated after repaying his debts. See HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 128. For a reiteration that the Company did not deliver purchased lots before they were paid for see HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 94.

⁹⁰ For example, see HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 59, 61, 63, 79.

⁹¹ Calculated from HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

⁹² See Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3. Annual sale revenue at the HBC's auctions in London, 1783-1820 (in £).



Notes: Each sale year runs from December to June. There is no data in the sale books for the years 1789-90 through to 1794-5 and for 1801-2 to 1805-6. The sale book data for 1806-7 and 1809-10 appear to be incomplete. The chart includes data taken from Carlos's study of the sale revenue noted in the Company's grand ledgers. Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books, 1770-1810*; and Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 127, 204.

nineteenth century.⁹³ The 1803-4, 1804-5, and 1805-6 sales show a slight decline in sales revenue with an average annual of £58,182 returned.⁹⁴ Data from the grand ledgers in Figure 4.3 show that the blockade years in 1806-7 (£21,796) and 1807-8 (£39,900) were particularly poor sale years on account of difficulties in the re-export trade to Europe. The furs offered for sale on 7 October 1807 were only furs that were in demand for home manufacture.⁹⁵ In March 1809, the Company's warehouse held three years' worth of furs that were usually re-exported and, as a result, the Company paid no dividend to its stockholders in 1809.⁹⁶ The situation temporarily improved, with a recovery in sales in 1808-9 (£72,343) and 1810-11 (£63,212).⁹⁷ The 1811-2 sale was another poor year with returns of only £37,854, which led to no dividends being paid in 1811 and 1812.⁹⁸ Sales recovered well in 1812-3 (£84,715) and 1813-4 (£66,254) but these were followed by poor years in 1815-6 (£44,884) and 1816-7 (£32,059).⁹⁹ The period closed with particularly good returns. Indeed, the Company's best sale year was in 1817-8 when revenue reached £94,943. Strong sales revenue at the end of the period was no doubt a result of the surge in the Company's fur imports which, as chapter two discussed, was largely prompted by an increase in the number of procured marten. While the Company's sales revenue show increasing returns in the late 1780s, 1790s, and after 1817, it is perhaps more notable that the sales during the blockade years held up as well as they did.

Each of the lots sold at auction was of a specific type of fur and so it is possible to establish which furs provided the bulk of the Company's revenue. Table 4.6 shows the average annual sale returns for the main types of furs and several other articles. Over half of the Company's revenue came from the sale of beaver. An average of £13,570 (52 per cent) was returned from the sale of beaver in the 1780s and at £31,317 (56 per cent) the amount was almost two-and-a-half times higher in 1795-6 to 1809-10.¹⁰⁰ Parchment beaver accounted for most of the beaver sales. In the first period, yearly returns of parchment beaver averaged £7,127 (63 per cent) and in the second they averaged £12,595 (70 per cent). Cub beaver made up around one quarter of beaver sales; 24 per cent (£2,671) in the 1780s and 23 per cent in 1795-1810. Returns were lower for coat beaver

⁹³ See Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 127, 204.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127. Also see Figure 4.3.

⁹⁵ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 47.

⁹⁶ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 85.

⁹⁷ Carlos, *Duopoly*, p. 127.

⁹⁸ HBCA, A.1/50, *London Minute Book*, 1810-4, fos. 27, 58.

⁹⁹ Carlos, *Duopoly*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁰ See Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. HBC's average annual sale revenue by commodity, 1783-1810 (in £).

	1782-3 to 1788-9	1795-6 to 1809-10
<i>Furs</i>		
Bear	528 (2%)	1,549 (3%)
Beaver	13,570 (52%)	31,317 (56%)
Cat	811 (3%)	1,759 (3%)
Deer	208 (1%)	470 (1%)
Fox	644 (2%)	2,066 (4%)
Marten	5,729 (22%)	7,353 (13%)
Musquash	110 (0%)	928 (2%)
Otter	1,942 (7%)	4,283 (8%)
Wolf	1,237 (5%)	3,423 (6%)
Wolverine	137 (1%)	280 (1%)
Other ^a	105 (0%)	955 (2%)
Total	25,021 (95%)	54,382 (97%)
<i>Other</i>		
Bed Feathers	250 (1%)	453 (1%)
Castoreum	601 (2%)	423 (1%)
Quills	144 (1%)	235 (0%)
Whale Bone	0	43 (0%)
Whale Fins	139 (1%)	44 (0%)
Whale Oil	49 (0%)	125 (0%)
Other ^b	30 (0%)	203 (0%)
Total	1,213 (5%)	1,526 (3%)
Overall Average	26,233	55,907

Notes: Due to the limited data for the 1806-7 and 1809-10 sales, the averages for 1795-6 to 1809-10 were calculated by dividing by only seven years;

^a consists of badger, buffaloe, coney, elk, fawn, fisher, mink, rabbit, raccoon, skunk, and squirrel;

^b includes sundries and swan skins.

Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

and its share of the beaver sales declined from 14 per cent (£1,560) to 7 per cent (£1,118). From 1783 to 1810 then, beaver was without question the principal source of the Company's revenue. The second was the sale of marten, which returned an average of £5,729 (22 per cent) in the 1780s and £7,353 (13 per cent) from 1795-1810.¹⁰¹ If the sale books had continued into the 1810s then it is probable that marten would have at least returned to the proportion it held in the 1780s. Otter provided the third highest returns,

¹⁰¹ See Table 4.6.

wolf the fourth highest, and fox, cat, and bear each accounted for around 3 per cent.¹⁰² Sales of deer, musquash, wolverine, and other furs composed in total around 2 per cent in the 1780s and around 6 per cent from 1795-1810. Other commodities such as bed feathers and quills (by-products of the country provisions traded by Aboriginal peoples at the Company's posts), castoreum (a secretion from the beavers' urinary sacs which was used in medicine and perfumery), and whaling products did not supply the Company with much revenue.¹⁰³ While the marketing of these additional products shows that the Company did attempt to diversify its trade they failed to do so, and the Company's experiment into harvesting timber for export met a similar fate.¹⁰⁴

Prior to 1800 the increase in beaver sales and of the Company's revenue in general was largely the result of the growth in beaver imports from Hudson's Bay and the fact that this growth did not significantly depreciate prices. Figure 4.4 shows that the average price that the Company received for one parchment beaver skin declined in the 1780s, from a high of 19s. to a low of 9s. 5d. in 1787-8.¹⁰⁵ Even though twice as many beaver were imported in 1793-7 than in 1783-7, the price of parchment beaver recovered somewhat in the 1790s, averaging 12s. 5d. between 1795-6 and 1800-1.¹⁰⁶ Both coat and cub beaver showed a different trend. Prices increased between 1782-3 and 1784-5 before falling to a low of 5s. 11d. and 8s. 2d. respectively in 1787-8. Prices generally increased in the late 1790s. The price of coat beaver peaked at 13s. 8d. in 1799-1800, and in the same sale year the price of cub beaver averaged 16s., both higher than the price of parchment beaver at that time (13s. 3d.). The Company's sale books only provide sufficient data with which to calculate average prices for the 1807-8 sale but it is clear that the price of all three types of beaver had significantly advanced. Good quality coat beaver sold for an average of 18s. 2d., the same quality cub beaver sold for 22s. 7d., and parchment beaver sold at 22s. 1d.¹⁰⁷ In February 1806, Frances Oakey, the Company's Warehouse Keeper noted the 'enormous price' that beaver was then at and that the price would likely remain high due to depleting supplies in North America.¹⁰⁸ As was

¹⁰² See Table 4.6.

¹⁰³ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, pp. 153, 293, 313, 487.

¹⁰⁴ On the HBC's harvesting of timber for export see Burley, *Servants*, pp. 46-7.

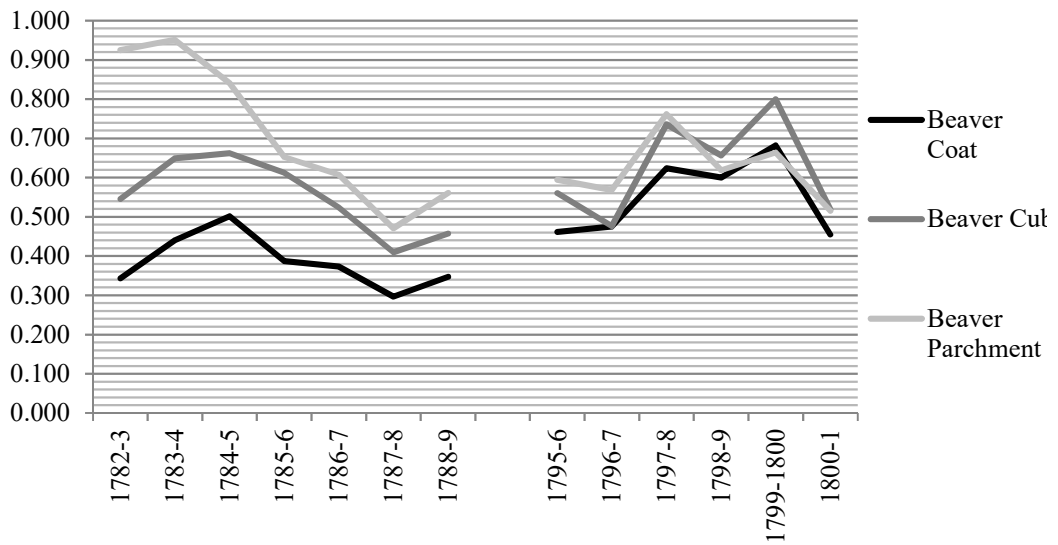
¹⁰⁵ All of the prices in Figure 4.4 were calculated by only using the prices for good quality beaver (those listed as 'coat beaver', 'cub beaver', or 'parchment beaver'). 'Fine beaver' or 'damaged and staged beaver' were not included in the calculations.

¹⁰⁶ See Figures 2.4 and 4.4.

¹⁰⁷ HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books, 1770-1810*.

¹⁰⁸ HBCA, A.10/1, *London Inward Correspondence — General, 1712-1816*, fos. 94-5.

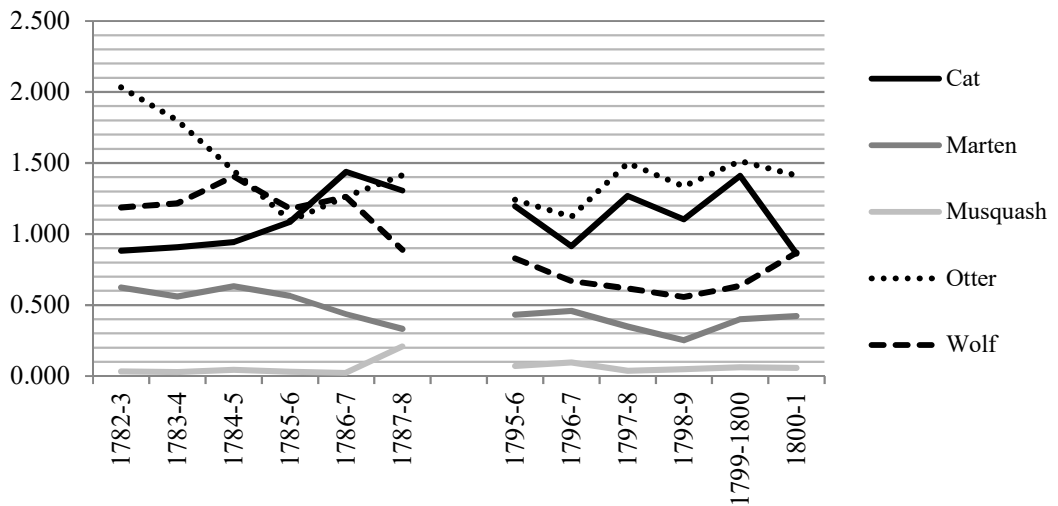
Figure 4.4. Average price of beaver purchased at the HBC's auctions, 1783-1810 (in £).



Notes: The price data from the 1807-8 sale were not plotted as the data for the 1806-7 and 1809-10 sales is too limited. The average prices for the 1807-8 sale were: £0.907 (coat beaver), £1.130 (cub beaver), and £1.104 (parchment beaver). Furs that were described as fine, damaged, or staged were not included in the averages.

Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

Figure 4.5. Average price of bear, cat, marten, otter, and wolf purchased at the HBC's auctions, 1783-1810 (in £).



Notes: No cat, marten, musquash, otter, or wolf was sold in the 1788-9 sale. Any price data from the 1807-8 sale were not plotted as the data for the 1806-7 and 1809-10 sales is too limited. Average prices available from the 1807-8 sale are: £0.207 (marten), £0.113 (musquash), and £0.820 (otter). Furs that were described as fine, damaged, or staged were not included in the averages.

Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

previously shown in chapter two, beaver imports from Hudson's Bay were 15 per cent lower in 1808-12 than they were in 1798-1802, so declining beaver imports raised beaver prices and may have helped to cushion problems in the re-export trade.¹⁰⁹

There was a pronounced decline in the price of furs which were principally re-exported, no doubt because demand for luxury apparel evaporated across war-torn Europe. As is shown in Figure 4.5, from a peak of 12s. 8d. in 1784-5, the price of marten decreased by around 40 per cent in the late 1790s to an average of 7s. 9d., and was reduced by a further 46 per cent in 1807-8 (4s. 2d.). Otter prices also decreased, falling from an average of 30s. 2d. in the 1780s to 27s. 1d. in the late 1790s, to their lowest price of 16s. 5d. in the 1807-8 sale.¹¹⁰ No wolf furs were sold during the 1807-8 sale year but Figure 4.5 shows a similar trend of declining prices. Black and white bear skins show another trend of falling prices. The price at which black bear skins were sold declined from an average of 76s. 9d. during the 1780s, to 55s. 9d. in the late 1790s, to just 22s. 10d. in 1808-9.¹¹¹ The price of white bear likewise declined from 30s. 2d. in the 1780s to 24s. in the late 1790s.¹¹² The prices of other furs show rather different trends. While no cat skins (lynx) were sold in 1807-8, during the 1780s and 1790s the price remained stable at around 22s.. Musquash were among the cheapest furs and they sold for around 1s. 3d. before 1800, although it appears that prices rose thereafter, selling for an average 4s. 2d. in 1807-8. Unfortunately, it is not possible to show how the price of the different varieties of fox changed over time as during the 1780s the listings in the sale books do not specify a type. Silver fox was the dearest fur, selling for an average of 74s. 9d. from 1795-6 to 1800-1. Cross fox were the next highest at an average of 28s. 1d., followed by red fox at 12s. 6d., white fox at 7s. 10d., and kitt fox at 3s. 4d..

The Company's minute books allude to the fact that the Company's sales method was not only responsive to the Company's own needs but also to those of its buyers. For instance, in 1796 a number of buyers — several of whom were large-scale purchasers — had great difficulty in paying due to the 'great scarcity of money'.¹¹³ While the Company charged interest for the privilege, it held furs in its warehouse for at least five separate buyers including Schneider & Co., T. C. Crane, Walduck & Co., Geledneki & Co., and

¹⁰⁹ See Figure 2.4. In their letters to Inglis, Ellice in London, Alexander Mackenzie & Co. (Montreal) also identified high beaver prices as a key reason for the firm continuing to make 'handsome profits' in 1807 and 1808. See Carlos, *Duopoly*, pp. 106-7.

¹¹⁰ See Figure 4.5.

¹¹¹ Calculated from HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

¹¹² No white bear were sold at the 1807/8 sale.

¹¹³ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 73.

Borradaile & Co..¹¹⁴ Another way in which the Company assisted its buyers was by postponing the dates of its auctions and by extending the period for prompt payment. For instance, following the sale on 17 May 1797, the Company extended the Prompt Day to two months after the sale.¹¹⁵ Delayed arrival of the ‘Hamburg mails’ caused the Company to reschedule a number of auctions. The first instance noted in the minute books was on 6 February 1799 when the sale of that day was postponed to 18 February.¹¹⁶ Come the time of the rearranged sale, the mails had still not arrived leading the Company to sell the domestic furs of coat and parchment beaver, and to postpone the selling of the re-export furs to 6 March 1799.¹¹⁷ Only part of the correspondences from the continent had arrived by 6 March so the sale was postponed again to 8 March.¹¹⁸ Further postponements occurred in March 1800, February and April 1805, and February 1806.¹¹⁹ Of course rearranging sales did not only allow London merchants to receive up to date instructions and market information from their correspondents on the continent; they also benefitted the Company by ensuring competitive bidding at the auctions.¹²⁰ This also suggests that the HBC was actually very flexible in its selling practices.

While it was in the Company’s interest to alter its sales pattern during the French wars, there is more direct evidence that the connections between the Company and its buyers were closer than is apparent at first sight. Following the dismissal of the Assistant Warehouseman on 6 August 1800, Frances Oakey was appointed to the role and, for the first time the HBC Committee decreed that Company warehousemen would have to provide securities from two or more sponsors in order to be eligible for the role.¹²¹ In

¹¹⁴ In November 1796, the Company received the following interest on held furs: £23 1s. 7d. from Schneider & Co., £4 17s. 6d. from Charles-T. Crane, £3 12s. 4d. from Walduck & Co., £24 6s. 9d. from Geledneki & Co., and in the following month, £56 6s. 1d. from Borradaile & Co.. who then also paid £1,412 1s. 7d. for their purchased lots. See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 79, 83. Geledneki & Co. also paid £19 19s. 4d. in interest in March 1798 for furs kept in the Company’s warehouse. See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 108. The EIC also extended this practice to the buyers of tea at its auctions. Indeed, it was customary for London tea dealers to leave their purchases in the Company’s warehouses to be removed according to current demand. See Makepeace, *Warehouse Labourers*, p. 24.

¹¹⁵ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 94.

¹¹⁶ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 123-4.

¹¹⁷ HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fos. 124-5.

¹¹⁸ The furs sold at the sale on 8 March consisted of furs that were largely for re-export and included: marten, otter, cat, wolf, wolverine, bear, fisher, and mink. See HBCA, A.1/47, *London Minute Book*, 1792-9, fo. 127.

¹¹⁹ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fos. 17, 116, 119; and HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 6.

¹²⁰ Rich appears to state that the Company postponed sales in 1799 in an effort to break a buyers’ ring. The evidence in the Company’s minute books, however, points towards the disturbances in the re-export trade as the deciding factor. Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, Vol. 2, p. 211.

¹²¹ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 25.

October 1800, Frances Oakey provided securities totalling £1,000, the names of which included John Henry Schneider (£500), John Daniel Hose Senior (£150), Peter Raymond Poland (£150), Borradailes & Clark (£100), and John Ingles (£100).¹²² The first four of these were regular buyers at the Company's auctions. In March 1806, by which time Oakey had advanced to become the Company's Warehouse Keeper, William Hagel was appointed as the Assistant Warehouseman. Hagell provided securities from Peter Raymond Poland (£500) and Christian Schneider (£500), and Oakey's securities derived from the aforementioned Poland (£500) and John Henry Schneider (£500).¹²³ All of these named guarantors purchased furs from the Company. Clearly the Company derived its chief warehousemen from individuals whom had close connections to the Company's buyers. Appointed warehousemen also likely had prior experience in the fur trade. Indeed, upon assuming the role of Warehouse Keeper in 1808, Hagell was obliged to liquidate his 'private concerns in the fur trade'.¹²⁴

The way in which the HBC sold its furs was thus very transparent. The Company marketed its furs openly and circulated annual declarations of its imported produce among London fur dealers and other interested parties called 'Cargoes of the Hudson's Bay Company's Ships'.¹²⁵ Openness and the cultivation of trust amongst buyers was an integral part of the Company's sales strategy. This system evolved over time as a means with which to preserve the Company's Charter. From 1783 to 1821 there is only one occurrence in the Company's minute books that suggests disquiet amongst buyers. Following the sale on 4 May 1807, the Company received letters from several buyers stating that they refused to complete their purchases on account of irregularities having occurred at the time of the sale.¹²⁶ The Company investigated the claims but the minutes do not state the outcome of these investigations and it is unfortunate that none of the correspondence surrounding this incident has survived.¹²⁷ Analysis of the records of the Feltmakers' and Skinners' Companies — principally the companies' minute books — do

¹²² HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 26. Frances Oakey also provided the same securities in 1801. See HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 51.

¹²³ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fo. 90; and A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 11.

¹²⁴ HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 70.

¹²⁵ HBCA, A.1/48, *London Minute Book*, 1799-1805, fos. 70, 90; HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 75; and HBCA, A.53/1, *Fur Trade Importation Book*, 1799-1912, fos. 1-12.

¹²⁶ Letters were received from Borradailes & Clark, Henshaw, Barker & Co., Miller & Christy, Wontner & Son, and Walduck & Sons. See HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fo. 32.

¹²⁷ No letters surrounding the incident are contained in the Company's London correspondence. See HBCA, A.5/4, *London Correspondence Book Outwards — General*, 1796-1808; and A.10/1, *London Inward Correspondence — General*, 1712-1816.

not show any dissatisfaction with the HBC or, for that matter, the Canada merchants.¹²⁸ There is no indication that the Company's buyers petitioned Parliament to protest against the Company's Charter as the Feltmakers' Company had previously done in 1690, and as both the Feltmakers' and Skinners' Companies had done in 1697.¹²⁹ Rich claims that by around 1819 there was unrest amongst the wholesale fur-dealers in London because of price instabilities resulting from the clashes between the HBC and NWC in North America, and that they were 'ready to offer their intervention or get the City members to make a stir in Parliament' but he provides no reference for this assertion.¹³⁰ By conducting an open trade solely on the London market, the HBC may well have foregone more advantageous commercial arrangements, but retaining respectability and the approval of its buyers was a more pressing concern.

The NWC, on the other hand, did not have to satisfy comparable expectations and did not have chartered rights to defend, which allowed the Company's London agents to pursue business associations that were loose, flexible, and more secretive.¹³¹ Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that the volume of the Company's imports could easily glut the London market. While McTavish, Fraser solely managed the sale of the NWC's furs prior to 1804, the re-organisation of the Company following the addition of former rival firms during the Company's merger with the XYC altered the arrangement.¹³² The records of two court cases in the bankruptcy papers at The National Archives reveal that the Canada merchants, as they styled themselves, were composed of four London firms that included: Inglis, Ellice & Co., McTavish, Fraser & Co., Mackenzie, Gillespie & Parker, and Brickwood, Daniel & Co..¹³³ The activities of these firms were described as importing 'from Canada and elsewhere fur skins and other articles relating to the trade or business of [a] furrier'.¹³⁴ During his cross-examination by the Chancery Court, John Fraser stated that the orator, Frederick Gottlieb Boccius (a German re-export furrier) owed, in total, £31,076 to these firms for 'goods sold and delivered' and

¹²⁸ Guildhall Library, MS01570/5-6, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book*, 1782-1825; and Guildhall Library, MS30708/17-20, *Worshipful Company of Skinners, Court Book*, 1800-25.

¹²⁹ Interestingly, both of these occurrences coincide with the Company attempting to acquire parliamentary ratification of its Charter. See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*, pp. 265-9, 276, 361.

¹³⁰ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 2*, p. 385.

¹³¹ For a recent although somewhat uncritical discussion of the NWC's fluid business connections see MacQuarrie, 'Transnational Dimensions', pp. 231-68.

¹³² Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 191-2.

¹³³ The partners of these firms were previously stated in chapter one. See chapter one, footnote 125.

¹³⁴ TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccius v Steinberg*, 1813. Fraser agreed with this description of the Canada merchants. See TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccius v Inglis*, 1814.

for ‘money lent’.¹³⁵ The principal creditor was Inglis, Ellice whom Fraser alleged was owed £11,840 for supplied merchandise and £2,096 in loans.¹³⁶ While the four firms closely worked with one another when selling their furs, just as the Houses in Montreal did when preparing their annual ‘outfits’, each firm evidently received a share of the fur consignments that corresponded to the value of the manufactures that they had despatched to Montreal.

McTavish, Fraser was, therefore, less dominant in the NWC’s London affairs after 1804 than they had been in the previous two decades. While the turn of the century saw the London operations become increasingly decentralised, the sale of the NWC’s furs through closed private deals as opposed to public auctions had, since the early 1790s, increased. The majority of the furs imported from Canada ended up at a metropolitan auction and this appears to have remained the case even after private dealings became more common. Robinson, Goad, & Row of 23 Little St. Thomas Apostles, and its successor partnerships, served as the main brokers whom sold large volumes of the furs imported from the Americas.¹³⁷ In 1783, Robinson, Goad & Row served as brokers for at least four fur auctions, all of which were held at the New York Coffee House on Sweeting’s Alley.¹³⁸ The sales that occurred on 26-7 February, and 20-1 March included a great number and wide range of furs that could only have originated from the Canadian fur trade. For instance, the sale on 26-7 February included 87,000 raccoon, 26,705 marten, 50,800 musquash, and the auction on 20-1 March consisted of 80,700 parchment beaver and 97,250 deer.¹³⁹ As Figures 2.2 and 2.3 in chapter two showed, very little raccoon, marten, musquash, and beaver was imported into Britain from the United States whereas

¹³⁵ TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccius v Inglis*, 1814.

¹³⁶ The others sums that Fraser alleged Boccius owed to the other three firms were £8,494 (£7,240 for goods and £1,254 for loans) to McTavish, Fraser, £3,795 (£3,300 for goods and £495 for loans) to Mackenzie, Gillespie & Parker, and £4,851 (£4,100 for goods and £751 for loans) to Brickwood, Daniel. See TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccius v Inglis*, 1814. Interestingly, while the amounts Fraser claimed were owed to McTavish, Fraser and Mackenzie, Gillespie were identical to the sums that Boccius maintained were asked of him when appearing before the Court in 1813, Boccius insisted that Inglis, Ellice (£19,364) and Brickwood, Daniel (£4,351) had asked for far more than they were owed. See TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccius v Steinberg*, 1813.

¹³⁷ *Kent’s Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794). Between 1794 and 1796 the brokerage firm went by the name of Robinson, Row, Newby & Row, before changing to Row, Newby, Row & Goad in 1796-9. For instance, see *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 22 February 1783; *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 19 November 1793; *The Public Ledger*, 28 January 1796; and *Prince’s London Price Current*, 14 December 1798.

¹³⁸ See *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 20 January, 12 March, 12 April, and 5 August 1783.

¹³⁹ *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 20 January and 12 March 1783. The 17 April sale was composed of 30,500 parchment beaver and around 3,500 deer, while the auction on 21 August was for 22,000 deer and other sundry furs. See *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 12 April and 5 August 1783.

large volumes were imported from Canada. Furthermore, John Fraser routinely mentioned Row, Newby & Co. in his letters to Simon McTavish.¹⁴⁰ Again, the quantities of furs sold by Row, Newby, Row, & Goad at auction on 11-2 March 1799 could only have originated from Canada — a sale that included 194,000 raccoon, 44,485 marten, and 54,822 musquash — and 55,427 parchment and 31,920 cub beaver were sold at another auction on 4 April.¹⁴¹ Further advertisements in *The London Gazette* suggest that the use of public auctions continued into the early nineteenth century.¹⁴² It does seem, however, that the NWC's London Houses were not as transparent in informing the London community about the volume of their imports. While Row & Co. informed *Prince's London Price Current* of the 'cargoes of sundry ships arrived from Canada' on 20 December 1799 and stated that they would be sold by a public sale on 6 February, 12-3 March, and 3 April 1800, such notices do not appear to have been as regular as the comparable communications issued by the HBC.¹⁴³

In the 1790s, alongside the NWC's adventures into the China trade, McTavish, Fraser began to make dealings with German re-export merchants active in the fur trade. One of the first of these appears to have been with the 'great furrier' John Henry Schneider in 1792.¹⁴⁴ In 1794, Fraser offered all of the year's beaver to a single buyer on the condition that the deal was not revealed to other purchasers or the brokers.¹⁴⁵ Such arrangements enabled the London firm to quickly dispose of furs at fair prices, although Fraser did sometimes struggle to find suitable buyers, however, thus requiring the use of public auctions.¹⁴⁶ In the terms of these private dealings, McTavish, Fraser largely received payments in bills that were payable at future dates.¹⁴⁷ Deals with Schneider continued into the late 1790s with Fraser noting in December 1799 that he would have to

¹⁴⁰ For instance, see 'John Fraser to Simon McTavish' 14 May 1795, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence*, 1791-9, fo. 22; and 'John Fraser to Simon McTavish 5 March 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fos. 11-2.

¹⁴¹ The 11-2 March sale included a large volume of bear, cat, fox, and otter, and quoted quantities of beaver sold at the 4 April sale do not include fine parchment and fine cub beaver. See *Prince's London Price Current*, 8 March 1799; and *Prince's London Price Current*, 5 April 1799.

¹⁴² For instance, see *The London Gazette*, 21 December 1805 and 24 December 1814.

¹⁴³ *Prince's London Price Current*, 20 December 1799. The only other publications of 'cargoes of sundry ships arrived from Canada' appeared on 14 December 1798 and 2 December 1799. See *Prince's London Price Current*, 14 December 1798 and 2 December 1799.

¹⁴⁴ See Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 191-2; and 'John Fraser to Simon McTavish' 9 April 1792, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fos. 51-7.

¹⁴⁵ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 191-2.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2, 211; and 'John Fraser to Simon McTavish' 14 May 1795, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fo. 225.

¹⁴⁷ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. 2, pp. 191-2.

continue providing ‘very heavy advances’ to Schneider for the foreseeable future.¹⁴⁸ Agreements were also increasingly made with Boccius, although the extension of significant amounts of credit to the furrier by McTavish, Fraser proved disastrous when Boccius returned to London from the Continent in 1800 with news that his business had suffered ‘great losses’.¹⁴⁹ Boccius owed £30,000 to the then three London Houses of the NWC, £12,655 of which was owed to McTavish, Fraser.¹⁵⁰ While Fraser expected Boccius would be able to return two-thirds of the amount within the year, he was again at a loss as to who would buy the Company’s furs as he was reluctant to extend more credit to the furrier.¹⁵¹ Fraser’s woes were further exacerbated with the news that the HBC’s latest sale had been an exceptional one. The buyers had been enthralled by the high quality of the Company’s lots and the care that had been taken during their sorting and grading, leading to a ‘very sharp competition’.¹⁵² Once more, the NWC’s furs for that season were of a much poorer quality and contained ‘a great deal of trash...particularly Bears and Raccoon which had much better been burnt in the country’.¹⁵³ These ‘under-the-counter’ deals attracted criticism. In 1791, John Brickwood, whom had previously supplied trade goods and purchased furs from McTavish, Fraser, urged the firm to stay loyal to the use of public auctions, citing the perils of giving a single buyer control over supply.¹⁵⁴ The NWC’s London Houses did continue to conclude private agreements with buyers however.

Another change came when Fraser scaled-back the extension of credit to buyers, except when it came to Boccius. The change in payments came from Fraser’s conclusion

¹⁴⁸ While Aisling MacQuarrie states that relations between Schneider and McTavish, Fraser came to a discordant end in 1793, there is later correspondence that suggests deals were made after this year. See MacQuarrie, et al, ‘Transnational Dimensions’, p. 238; ‘John Fraser to Simon McTavish’ 13 May 1795 and 14 December 1799, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fos. 223-4, 344-5; and ‘McTavish, Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 5 March 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fo. 13.

¹⁴⁹ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, p. 211; and ‘John Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 22 February 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fo. 11.

¹⁵⁰ ‘John Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 22 February 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fo. 11.

¹⁵¹ ‘John Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 22 February 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fo. 11.

¹⁵² Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, p. 211; and ‘John Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 28 February 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fo. 12. John Fraser kept a close eye on the HBC’s sales and regularly sent a copy of the Company’s sale catalogues to Montreal together with a summary of the prices realised. For example, see ‘John Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 14 December 1799, HBCA, F.3/1, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1791-9, fo. 346.

¹⁵³ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, p. 211; and ‘McTavish, Fraser to McTavish, Frobisher’ 5 March 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fo. 13.

¹⁵⁴ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 191-2.

that the extension of credit had ‘not only been harassing and hazardous to ourselves, but ruinous to them’.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Fraser estimated that through the speculations arising from such arrangements ‘our great Buyer has sunk half his fortune’.¹⁵⁶ These speculations were, it seems, into ‘foreign circulations’ of commodities such as coffee, from which Fraser believed Boccus had lost no less than £14,000.¹⁵⁷ Until at least 1807, Boccus & Steinberg dealt ‘very largely’ with the NWC’s London Houses, and in this year, facing the threat of bankruptcy, the firm’s property was placed into a trust managed by the Canada merchants and Boccus & Steinberg were employed to manage the trade and property of the trust.¹⁵⁸ It is not clear how long Boccus and John Steinberg served the London Houses but by 1813, Boccus was at the Chancery Court accusing John Steinberg of poor management of the now dissolved partnership of Boccus & Steinberg, and the Canada merchants of manufacturing the firm’s distress in 1807.¹⁵⁹

One final aspect that distinguished how the NWC’s furs were sold in Europe was the use of American intermediaries to ship furs direct to Hamburg, thus bypassing the London market. While in New York in 1798, Alexander Mackenzie contracted John Murray & Son of New York to ship beaver and wolf skins to Hamburg.¹⁶⁰ Presumably Astor assisted the smuggling of the furs from Montreal to New York but it has never been established how this illicit enterprise worked in practice.¹⁶¹ While the proceeds from the wolf skins were disappointing, it was hoped that the purchaser of the beaver would become a regular large-scale buyer.¹⁶² Through the use of American ships, the Company supposedly shipped furs direct from Quebec to Hamburg in 1804 and 1805, although it is not entirely clear how the Company circumvented the Navigation Acts or the restrictions

¹⁵⁵ ‘John Fraser to Simon McTavish’ 12 May 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fos. 24-5.

¹⁵⁶ While it is not entirely clear who Fraser was referring to here, it is either Schneider or Boccus. See ‘John Fraser to Simon McTavish’ 12 May 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fos. 24-5.

¹⁵⁷ See ‘John Fraser to Simon McTavish’ 12 May 1800, HBCA, F.3/2, *North West Company — Correspondence etc.*, 1800-27, fos. 24-5.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccus v Steinberg*, 1813; and TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccus v Inglis*, 1814.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccus v Steinberg*, 1813.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Alexander Mackenzie to McTavish, Fraser’ 29 January and 4 February 1798, in Lamb, *Alexander Mackenzie*, pp. 462-5.

¹⁶¹ Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company, Vol. 2*, pp. 206, 249. In 1787, Astor began leasing a warehouse in Montreal to store purchased furs for later resale in New York. See Campbell, *North West Company*, p. 57.

¹⁶² The purchaser was not named. See ‘Alexander Mackenzie to McTavish, Frobisher’ 29 January and 4 February 1798, in Lamb, *Alexander Mackenzie*, pp. 462-3, 466-7.

imposed by Jay's Treaty (1794).¹⁶³ In all likelihood, however, only small quantities of furs were conveyed through such illicit schemes.

Rich and Carlos have pointed towards the NWC's fluid external business associations as evidence that the Company was better placed to navigate market distress during the French Wars than was the HBC. According to this argument, the NWC's ability to diversify away from the London market and ship furs to New York, Hamburg, and Canton allowed the Company to effectively navigate wartime disruption.¹⁶⁴ More recently, Aisling MacQuarrie has argued that the Company's transnational network 'allowed the Company to be both pragmatic and expedient in its endeavours'.¹⁶⁵ What these studies neglect, however, is that the Company's flexible approach to business emerged because of the volume of the Company's trade and the protracted period needed for their enterprise to yield a return on capital. These factors propelled the Company's agents in both Montreal and London to pursue multiple sale strategies that included risky and sometimes unprofitable ventures within and beyond the North-Atlantic World, in addition to, extensive private dealings with a few buyers. It was, therefore, not so much a case of the Company being more adept at responding to trade dislocations but rather the absolute necessity that it did so. Furthermore, there is a need for a more critical appraisal of the Company's ventures into the European market and its dealings with German re-export merchants as little is currently known about how successful these ventures were. Indeed, the Company's adventures to China have recently been cast in a less favourable light and the Company's European dealings may well have similarly achieved mixed success.¹⁶⁶ The HBC strictly adhered to the use of metropolitan auctions during this period, a decision that ensured that fur buyers did not mount a challenge to the Company's Charter. In a similar vein, the NWC's shift away from open sales on the London market would not have persuaded a united front of metropolitan buyers to use their political influence in support of the Canada merchants. On the one hand, the HBC had pacified a powerful interest group that had previously threatened the continuation of the Company's Charter, while on the other, the NWC's larger share of the fur trade and its use of private

¹⁶³ Carlos, *Duopoly*, p. 107. Jay's Treaty forbid American ships from anchoring at Quebec or another other sea-port in British North America. See *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, between His Britannick Majesty and the United States of America* (P.P. 1794, Vol. 1), p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Carlos, *Duopoly*, p. 107.

¹⁶⁵ MacQuarrie, *Transnational Dimensions*, p. 240.

¹⁶⁶ See Keith, 'Isaac Todd', pp. 566-97.

sale agreements meant that the Company's London Houses were not in a position to seek the assistance of these key agents of change.

III. The Buyers

It is important to consider the composition of the metropolitan community of buyers at this time. Who were the key buyers? What roles did they play? How did they organise their lobbying activities? The best source available to begin such an analysis is the HBC's sale books.¹⁶⁷ As was previously shown, the HBC sold more than just furs. Merchants, furriers, skimmers, hat makers, and brokers were the major buyers but it should be noted that the minor, miscellaneous articles put up for sale at the Company's auctions attracted upholsterers, oil and colourmen, drug merchants, stationers, and whalebone cutters.¹⁶⁸ There were, in total, 230 individuals or partnerships listed in the Company's sales books, 158 of which purchased furs or castoreum.¹⁶⁹ Table 4.7 shows the value distribution of the purchases made by the buyers of furs and castoreum at the auctions between 1783 and 1810. While there is only 14 years of data, it is clear that a few buyers were predominant. There were six buyers who purchased over £30,000 worth of furs, and 13 who purchased over £10,000.¹⁷⁰ There were also a large number of small buyers; 104 purchased furs or castoreum to a value of less than £999.¹⁷¹

Through cross-referencing the Company's account books with trade directories, it is apparent that merchants were the principal buyers. Of the 90 identified buyers in Table 4.8, 25 were listed as 'merchants' and they accounted for 41 per cent of the purchases (£202,000). There were 22 Furriers and/or Skimmers and at 27 per cent of the purchases (£135,000) they were the second most prominent group.¹⁷² The terms 'furrier' and 'skinner' were largely synonymous as although both terms were widely used in trade directories, the types of furs purchased by each group were identical. While trade directories referred to Frederick Peterstorf & Co. as 'furriers and skimmers', John Fraser referred to them purely as 'furriers' in his testimony to the Chancery Court.¹⁷³ On the other hand, a hide and skin broker was certainly a different profession, as the sale

¹⁶⁷ HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

¹⁶⁸ Colourmen traded in dyes and oilmen sold various forms of oils such as olive and whale oil.

¹⁶⁹ Castoreum refers to a secretion from the beavers' urinary sacs which was used in medicine and perfumery.

¹⁷⁰ See Table 4.7.

¹⁷¹ See Table 4.7.

¹⁷² See Table 4.8.

¹⁷³ *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); and TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccius v Inglis*, 1814.

Table 4.7. Value distribution of the total purchases made by buyers of furs and castoreum at the HBC's auctions, 1783-1810 (in £).

	No. of Buyers
30,000>	6
10,000-29,999	7
5,000-9,999	9
1,000-4,999	32
100-999	68
<100	36

Notes: Out of the 230 buyers listed in the accounts only 158 purchased furs or castoreum.

Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

catalogues collected by Dyster, Nadler & Co. show that they were largely interested in livestock hides, seal, and deer.¹⁷⁴ There was no doubt a considerable degree of overlap between the use of the term merchants and that of furriers/skinners. Those labelled as merchants in trade directories may have had dealings in other trades, whereas those described as furriers and/or skinners were probably solely active in the fur trade. When it came to describing themselves, however, those listed as merchants in trade directories often labelled themselves as furriers. For example, Schneider was described as a furrier at the Chancery Court but was listed as a merchant in trade directories.¹⁷⁵ 'Furrier' was also used to describe those who 'dressed' furs, manufacturing them into coat trimmings, tippets, and other finished items.¹⁷⁶ Occasionally, the term 'manufacturing furrier' was used to distinguish between the two groups but this label was not used in trade directories.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ For example, they do not appear to have collected many of the HBC's catalogues. See LMA, CLC/B/72/MS10391/1, *Dyster, Nadler and Company*, 1802-16.

¹⁷⁵ *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccicus v Steinberg*, 1813; and TNA, C 13/165/50, *Boccicus v Inglis*, 1814.

¹⁷⁶ The dual use of the term 'furrier' is plainly evident in a petition sent by the 'Furriers of London' to the Board of Trade in 1814. While the petition was primarily concerned with removing restrictions that prevented the dyeing of coney and hare skins, the petition itself was signed by merchants such as Schneider and those who were more involved in the manufacturing process. See TNA, BT 1/89, 'Memorial of the Furriers of London', *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 18 May 1814.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccicus v Steinberg*, 1813.

Table 4.8. Classification of the buyers of furs and castoreum at the HBC's auctions, 1783-1810.

	No. of Buyers	Value of Purchases (£)
Merchants	25	202,387 (41%)
Furriers and/or Skinners ^a	22	135,128 (27%)
Hat-makers ^b	19	95,199 (19%)
Brokers	3	52,634 (11%)
Curriers ^c	8	3,912 (1%)
Drug Merchants ^d	9	2,899 (1%)
Other ^e	4	527 (0%)
Total	90	492,686

Notes: Of the 158 buyers in the accounts who purchased furs or castoreum, 90 have been identified in London trade directories;

^a includes 12 Furriers (£50,371), 6 Skinners (£37,412), and 5 Skinners & Furriers (£47,545);

^b consists of 10 hat-makers (£63,987), 4 hatters (£8,417), and 4 hat-manufacturers (£6,734);

^c also includes 2 tanners (£203);

^d composed of 6 drug merchants (£2,222), 2 drug brokers (£645), and 1 chemist;

^e made up of 1 oil & colourman (£174), 1 glover (£160), 1 warehouseman (£171), and 1 mercer (£22).

Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810; *Bailey's Northern Directory* (1781); *Bailey's British Directory*, 1st Edition (1784); and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

Focusing on the individual buyers shows how dominant a small group of purchasers were at the Company's auctions. The five top buyers accounted for 42 per cent of the overall sales of furs and castoreum, and the highest 10 purchasers composed 61 per cent (Table 4.9). John Henry Schneider & Co., merchants at Bow Lane, was the Company's most prolific buyer.¹⁷⁸ They alone spent a total of £84,662 which made up 15 per cent of the purchases. There were many other prominent London merchants such as John Christian Schreiber (£39,985), Anthony Geledneki & Son (£27,975), and C. S. Geledneki & Son (£13,134).¹⁷⁹ With total purchases of £37,149, John & Benjamin Jowetts of Bermondsey Street were the largest furriers, although the 'skinner and furrier' John Daniel Hose at 19 Ludgate Hill was close behind with purchases of £32,665.¹⁸⁰ Together the purchases made by Jowetts and Hose made up just over half of the payments made by

¹⁷⁸ *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹⁷⁹ See Table 4.9.

¹⁸⁰ See Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Top buyers of furs and castoreum at the HBC's auctions, 1783-1810.

	Classification	Location	Purchases (£)
1. John Henry Schneider & Co.	Merchants	Bow Lane, Cheapside	84,662
2. Borradailes, Clark & Co.	Hat-makers	34 Fenchurch St.	48,900
3. John Christian Schreiber	Merchant	24 Budge Row	39,985
4. John & Benjamin Jowetts	Furriers	Redlion Court, Bermondsey St.	37,149
5. Robinson, Goad, Row & Co.	Brokers	23 Little St. Thomas Apostles	36,497
6. John Daniel Hose	Skinner & Furrier	19 Ludgate Hill	32,665
7. Anthony Geledneki & Son	Merchants	55 Queen Street, Cheapside	27,975
8. John Peter Webber	Broker	21 Little Prescott St., Goodman's Fields	19,370
9. Chester & Walduck	Skinner	27 Bush Lane, Cannon St.	15,937
10. Barker, Henshaw & Co.	Hatters	Henshaw St., Oldham, Manchester	16,061
11. C. S. Geledneki & Son	Merchants	78 Queen St., Cheapside	13,134
12. Nicolay & Schindler	-	-	12,320
13. John, Daniel & William Paul	Skinner & Furriers	2 Mansion House St.	9,689
14. Henry Kellner	-	-	8,271
15. Thomas Barker	Broker	St. Catherine's Square	6,537
16. Charles Schreiber	Merchant	10 Labour-in-Vain Hill	6,201
17. Thomas Philips & Co.	-	-	5,811
18. Benjamin Kidney	Russia Merchant	6 Laurence Pountey Hill, Cannon St.	5,414
19. John William Vogle	-	-	5,382
20. Charles T Crane	Merchant	13 Bow Lane, Cheapside	5,284
21. John Ponten	Hat Manufacturer	15 Stanhope St., Clare Market	5,108
22. Joseph Hull	Skinner & Furrier	231 Bermondsey St.	4,833
23. Boccius, Steinberg & Co.	Merchants	10 Labour-in-Vain Hill	4,793
24. David Samuel	Merchant	43 Mansel St., Goodman's Fields	4,735
25. Herman & Joseph Berens	-	-	4,190

Notes: Of the 158 buyers who purchased furs or castoreum only 90 have been identified in London trade directories. Including unidentified buyers, a total of £574,857 was spent on furs and castoreum.

Source: HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810; *Bailey's Northern Directory* (1781); *Bailey's British Directory*, 1st Edition (1784); *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); and *The Commercial Directory* (1818).

furriers and skimmers. The names and the extent of their purchases in the Company's accounts show how German migrants, many of whom had been 'naturalised' as British citizens, dominated the purchasers made by merchants and furriers. In the eighteenth century, the German merchant community in London rapidly expanded as they established themselves as major agents of trade between the British, French, Spanish, and Russian empires.¹⁸¹ In London, much of this trade was initially in the form of importing German linens but their activities soon widened to include the export of tobacco, furs, and other colonial produce to Europe.¹⁸² German merchants present at the HBC's sales included: John Henry Schneider, John Christian Schreiber, Charles Schreiber, Justus Blankenhagen, Retberg & Co., Spitta, Molling & Co., John Daniel Hose, John William and John Daniel Paul, John William Vogel, and Boccius, Steinberg.¹⁸³ The purchases that are attributable to these names total £187,000 and makes up one third of the sales of furs and castoreum contained in the account books.¹⁸⁴

The third highest purchasers at the Company's auctions were hat makers. 19 hat makers were identified and they accounted for 19 per cent (£95,199) of the purchases.¹⁸⁵ Hat makers Borradailes, Clark & Co. of 34 Fenchurch Street was the Company's second best customer and they bought £48,900 worth of furs from the Company.¹⁸⁶ This firm must have been one of London's largest manufacturers of beaver and felt hats as they dwarfed the £5,108 spent by John Ponten, the next identified London 'hat-manufacturer'.¹⁸⁷ There was one notable provincial buyer at the auctions. The hatters Barker, Henshaw & Co. of Oldham, Manchester purchased £16,061 worth of beaver furs from the Company, one third of the purchases of Borradailes, Clark & Co..¹⁸⁸ While the craft of a furrier was largely confined to London, beaver and felt hats were manufactured in a number of provincial regions including Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, and

¹⁸¹ See Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, 'German Merchants and the British Empire during the Eighteenth Century', in John R. Davis, Stefan Manz and Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, eds., *Transnational Networks: German Migrants in the British Empire, 1670-1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 39-57.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-57.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-57; Beerbühl, *German Merchants in London*, pp. 136, 138, 154, 178, 191; and TNA, C 13/150/1, *Boccius v Steinberg*, 1813.

¹⁸⁴ Blankenhagen and Retberg only purchased castoreum.

¹⁸⁵ See Table 4.8.

¹⁸⁶ See Table 4.9 and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹⁸⁷ Ponten was located at 15 Stanhope Street, Clare Market. See *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794) and Table 4.9.

¹⁸⁸ This connection was found as the Company's sales books noted that the firm was located in Manchester. See HBCA, A.48/7, *Fur Sale Book*, 1796-1810, fo. 101. Also see Table 4.9; and *The Commercial Directory* (1818).

Gloucestershire.¹⁸⁹ Provincial manufacturers of such articles either had to rely upon London intermediaries to source their beaver skins or — as in the likely exceptional case of Barker, Henshaw & Co. — purchase them directly from the London market on their own account.

Unlike the dual use of the term furrier, hat maker solely referred to those who manufactured hats. The furrier and hatter communities were often opposed to one another when it came to influencing national commercial policy. Due to the greater number of people employed in the profession and its country-wide distribution, the hat manufacturers were the more influential of the two.¹⁹⁰ The eighteenth-century hatting industry had much success in lobbying government for restrictions on the exportation of felting furs and the importation of foreign hats. Indeed, when the ‘Furriers of London’ petitioned for the repeal of legislation that prohibited the dyeing of coney and hare skins following the appearance of a copy of the clause ‘all over London with an anonymous threat to put it in force’, the Board of Trade solicited the advice of Borradailes & Co. who quickly convened a Committee of the ‘Hat Manufacturers of London and Southwark’ to draw up a scathing response to the furriers request.¹⁹¹ The reply of the hatter’s six-strong committee succeeded in having the furriers’ plea, which was signed by 43 petitioners, disregarded.¹⁹² While on this occasion the Feltmakers’ Company was not involved, before 1800 at least, this institution was a focal point for the advancing the interests of the London and wider British hatting industry.¹⁹³ For instance, when William Pitt, then Lord Treasurer, was negotiating a commercial treaty with Portugal in the spring of 1787, the Feltmaker’s Company had a City MP deliver a memorial to Pitt that called for the

¹⁸⁹ TNA, BT 1/89, ‘Answer of the Hat Manufacturers of London to the application of the Furriers’, *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 24 June 1814.

¹⁹⁰ TNA, BT 1/89, ‘Answer of the Hat Manufacturers of London to the application of the Furriers’, *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 24 June 1814.

¹⁹¹ TNA, BT 1/89, ‘Memorial of the Furriers of London’, *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 18 May 1814; and BT 1/89, ‘Answer of the Hat Manufacturers of London to the application of the Furriers’, *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 24 June 1814.

¹⁹² The conveyed committee of hat manufacturers included George Ravenhill (of William Borradaile, Sons & Ravenhill), Thomas Christy (of J. W. & J. Christy), John Oakey (of John Oakey & Co.), John Plank (of Vaughan & Plank), Thomas Taylor (of Saxton, Taylor & Saxton), and John R. Harris (of John Harris & Son).

¹⁹³ The influence of the Feltmakers’ Company even extended beyond Britain. In October 1814 the Feltmakers’ Court received a petition for relief from Johann Carl Fredrich Toppel, a ‘Master Hatter and Manufacturer’ of Colditz in Leipzig, Germany. Mr Wontner Senr, probably the hat maker Thomas Wontner who was a mid-sized buyer of beaver and otter at the HBC’s auctions (£3,757), was asked by the Court to make enquiries on the subject. See Guildhall Library, MS01570/5, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book*, 1782-90, p. 678; *Kent’s Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794); and HBCA, A.48/6-7, *Fur Sale Books*, 1770-1810.

interests of the hat manufactories to be considered.¹⁹⁴ In addition, the Company sent letters to the principal hat manufacturers of Bristol, Manchester, and Newcastle-under-Lyme asking them to issue their own memorials on the matter and these requests were warmly received and complied with.¹⁹⁵ In contrast, the Skinners' Company does not appear to have advanced the interests of the furriers or skimmers craft with the same zeal as that of the Feltmakers' Company. It seems that furriers were seldom involved with the Skinners' Company by and after 1800, as only the brokers William Row, William Row Junior, and William Thomas Goad are listed as Assistants in the Company's minute books.¹⁹⁶

Brokers — who served as intermediaries between importers and furriers or hat makers — composed 11 per cent (£52,634) of the purchases of furs and castoreum at the HBC's auctions, but there were only three such tradesmen found in the search of trade directories.¹⁹⁷ Of course the analysis has its limitations. A search of more trade directories, especially around 1800, would no doubt lead to further identifications but it seems unlikely that this would significantly change the findings. The top broker was Robinson, Goad, Row & Co. and its various successor firms who were the Company's fifth best customer, purchasing a total of £36,497.¹⁹⁸ Although there were eight different carriers and nine drug merchants identified, they only each made up 1 per cent of the purchases.¹⁹⁹ A single glover and one mercer were also located in trade directories but their purchasers were exceptionally small, suggesting that it was not typical for these sorts of tradespeople to purchase furs from public auctions.²⁰⁰

Considering the strength of the hatting lobby over the merchants and furriers, the NWC's London Houses played a risky game by circumventing the London market or by concluding private agreements with German furriers; the risk was decidedly less if deals were also made with hat manufacturers, although there is no evidence of such

¹⁹⁴ Guildhall Library, MS01570/5, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book*, 1782-90, pp. 235-7.

¹⁹⁵ Apart from the response of the Bristol hatters of which no reply is mentioned in the Company's minute books. See Guildhall Library, MS01570/5, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book*, 1782-90, pp. 235-7. Another example of the Feltmakers' Company acting as a defender of the hatter's interests can be seen in November 1785 when the Company attempted to stamp out many 'pedlers and hawkers' evasion of the government's new duty on hats. See Guildhall Library, MS01570/5, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book*, 1782-90, p. 164.

¹⁹⁶ These three names appear regularly in the Company's minute books between 1800 and 1821. See Guildhall Library, MS30708/17-20, *Worshipful Company of Skinners, Court Book*, 1800-25.

¹⁹⁷ See Table 4.8.

¹⁹⁸ See Table 4.9.

¹⁹⁹ See Table 4.8.

²⁰⁰ See the 'other' category in Table 4.8.

arrangements. British furriers and hatters were not motivated to intervene in the conflict between the Hudson's Bay and Montreal fur trades except perhaps, as Rich suggests, in the immediate years prior to the merger between the two companies. In fact, the existence of the two concerns ensured neither could monopolise the London market and force up prices. The more pertinent question is why the London merchants and furriers, and the hat manufacturers in particular, allowed the merger of the two Companies to go ahead without much comment, allowing the HBC a *de facto* monopoly of the fur trade. In the end, the dwindling supply of beaver to the British market, partly a consequence of the clashes between the two companies but principally from North America's declining beaver population, probably made monopoly preferable to the ruinous effects of open competition in the trade. Metropolitan agents evidently thought that a single supplier was the preferable way forward and that they would be able to prevent the chartered Company from over-capitalising on its privileged position.

IV. Conclusion

Between 1783 and 1821 the London fur market underwent a number of significant changes. The British re-export trade in furs boomed during the 1790s but the Napoleonic Wars contributed to a long-term decline in the trade, and bankrupted several of the German merchants who had been principal agents of the exchange. The price of many of the non-felting furs collapsed as the demand for luxury furs in war-ridden Europe evaporated. British domestic consumption of a number of furs increased but the home market could not cushion all of the distresses in international trade. Beaver and musquash, both of which were used in the making of felt hats, bucked this trend, however, and British demand for these furs blossomed and prices rose accordingly. The exhaustion of the beaver population in North America led to falling beaver imports into Britain and prices increased further. The escalating conflict between the HBC and NWC on the frozen frontiers of the British North American Empire, ratcheted up political scrutiny of the fur trade, and led a diverse body of City interests to conclude that a single Company with a monopoly of the fur trade was preferable to the injurious effects of unrestrained free market competition.

The Company's competition with the Canada merchants, however, helped to insulate the HBC from accusations of market manipulation as it denied the Company a monopoly of the metropolitan market. The Company's firm commitment to the use of

public auctions and the transparency with which it declared the volume of its imports arose as a convenient way in which to abate criticism. The NWC, and its corresponding Houses in London, had greater liberty to conduct private sale agreements with fur buyers. Such arrangements likely did increase the profits of the Canada merchants, although it is debateable as to the extent to which they did so in light of the increased risk afforded by the extension of credit to key purchasers and the mixed success of the Company's adventures to China. Ultimately, the differences between the two companies' method of sales arose because of the distinct environments that the two concerns operated within; the HBC had a strong motivation for acting transparently in an effort to maintain its Charter, whereas the volume of the NWC's trade promoted the use of closed private deals and ventures into the China trade. It is perhaps surprising that the hat manufacturers of a growing number of provincial regions did not express dissatisfaction with London's monopoly of the fur trade. In order to explore this aspect further, the next chapter takes a closer look at the British manufacture of hats and other fur-related apparel, alongside the trade and distribution of these products to consumers in Britain and beyond.

Hats, Muffs, and Tippetts: The demand for fur-related apparel in Britain and beyond

At the Coronation of King William and Queen Mary, ‘the champion of England’, dressed in ‘armour of complete and glittering steel’ and a ‘beaver finely capped with plumes of feathers’, flung down his gauntlet on the floor of Westminster Hall and so issued the customary challenge to any who would dispute the rights of their Majesties to the crown of England, or so *The Morning Herald* mused in an anecdote published on 9 August 1783.¹ While this reflection on the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688 contained an imaginary tale of a seemingly old woman entering the Hall and accepting the Champion’s challenge, only to be disappointed at the Champion never making his appearance at Hyde Park on account of his refusal to duel with the ‘fair sex’, the Champion’s regalia signifies the illustrious status of the beaver hat in eighteenth-century Britain. Had the duel in this fanciful tale taken place then, in the cool air of April, the noblewomen in attendance would no doubt have been draped in a fur-lined cloak with a tippet about their shoulders and a matching muff clasped in their hands.

This chapter aims to shed light on the making of fur-garments and accessories and their distribution to consumers in Britain and abroad. The extant literature on the fur trade has seldom examined the manufacture and retail of fur garments and accessories to consumers. Some attention has been paid to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century trade in beaver hats but the scope and coverage of these studies is limited.² Indeed, the role of the furrier in crafting furs into wearing apparel remains obscure and there has been no attempt to understand how their profession fitted into the wider British economy during

¹ *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 9 August 1783.

² See Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 15-35; J. F. Crean, ‘Hats and the Fur Trade’, *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1962), pp. 373-86; and Murray G. Lawson, ‘The Beaver Hat and the North American Fur Trade’, in Malvina Bolus, ed., *People and Pelts: Selected Papers of the Second North American Fur Trade Conference* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1972), pp. 27-37.

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³ What did a ‘manufacturing furrier’ actually do? How did British beaver hats perform in global markets after 1783? Did the way in which fur garments and accessories were manufactured and the means through which they were retailed to consumers encourage monopoly within the fur trade?

The chapter is structured in three parts. The first explores the manufacture and sale of beaver hats in Britain. It examines the spatial distribution of production between London and provincial regions, as well as the retail trade in beaver hats, identifying patterns of consumer demand for the ever-changing styles of beaver hats. The second part offers a detailed analysis of the British overseas trade in beaver hats, highlighting the impact of high beaver prices and the division of exports between London and the outports. The final section examines the making of muffs, tippets, and other garments by metropolitan furriers, showing that London remained the nation’s manufacturing centre for fine fur-related apparel, in addition to the increasingly sophisticated network of retailers that marketed these products to provincial consumers, especially to the country’s emergent ‘middling sorts’.

I. ‘A Trade of Great National Importance’: The manufacture and retail of beaver hats in Britain

Over the course of the eighteenth century there was a considerable growth in the manufacture of beaver hats in Britain. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV of France led to an exodus of French Huguenots from Normandy to England, Holland, and Germany, which included numerous experienced hat makers.⁴ By the late seventeenth century there was already a well-established hatting industry in London that was concentrated in Southwark, and the newly arrived Huguenot refugees brought an influx of skills and experience to the borough.⁵ Southwark was thus well-placed to supply the rising demand for beaver hats in Britain, Europe, and the rapidly expanding European colonies across the Atlantic rim. While beaver hats were the most fashionable hats to be worn by the aristocracy and ‘middling sorts’ at this time — a position that they were to retain until the demand for silk hats seriously began to capture their consumer base from

³ For instance, Lawson states that the decline in the use of the beaver hat in the 1840s saw ‘shortly thereafter, a new combination... arise to pick up their fallen sceptre — fancy fur and the fur coat, the new fashionable mode of fur adornment’. Clearly there is little acknowledgement in the existing historiography of the use of fur outside of the hatting industry prior to the rise of the nineteenth-century fur coat. See Lawson, ‘Beaver Hat’, p. 36.

⁴ Madeleine Ginsburg, *The Hat: Trends and Traditions* (London: Studio, 1990), p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

the 1830s onwards — their high price limited their usage.⁶ Beaver was especially suited to the making of hats as it was water-repellent and retailers eagerly pointed out the ‘weatherproof’ nature of their hats to consumers.⁷ However, it should be noted that beaver hats also contained wool, and those referred to as ‘castor’ hats were made from a combination of sheep’s wool and either coney or beaver.⁸ Felt hats, on the other hand, were much cheaper than those that contained beaver, largely because they were made from a mix of coney and lambswool.⁹ By 1791, but probably earlier, musquash was also used in the making of beaver or castor hats, a development that was likely stimulated by the high price of beaver.¹⁰ While it is difficult to determine the number of beaver and felt hats produced in Britain each year, one official estimate in 1784 placed the figure at 4 million and 750,000 of these were exported.¹¹ Of the hats retained for domestic use, one-third were thought to be felt hats and the other two-thirds so-called ‘mixed’ hats or those that contained beaver or another type of fur.¹² As the prominent hat manufacturers of London and Southwark argued to the Board of Trade in June 1814, hatting was indeed ‘a trade of great national importance’.¹³

The quality of a beaver hat was largely dictated by its beaver content and the quality of the beaver itself. By 1783, the technique of ‘carroting’, so-called because of the colour that the process turned the pelts, was widely used to maximise the amount of beaver wool produced.¹⁴ The technique was pioneered in London at some point during the 1720s and involved immersing parchment beaver in a solution of mercuric nitrate.¹⁵ The treatment softened the pelts by breaking down the amino-acid chains of the hairs so that they became limp, twisted, and rough.¹⁶ This made the felting process easier and more effective. Carroting increased the volume of beaver hats that could be produced but the technique did not entirely displace the use of coat beaver. As pelts that had been softened more gradually through their wearing by Aboriginal peoples, coat beaver was superior in

⁶ On silk hats see Hanson, ‘The Myth of the Silk Hat’, pp. 420-35; and Ginsburg, *The Hat*, p. 86.

⁷ For instance, see *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 7 January 1783.

⁸ David Corner, ‘The Tyranny of Fashion: The Case of the Felt-Hatting Trade in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *Textile History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1991), p. 155.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰ See ‘George Martin to Davies & Co.’ 30 April and 2 July 1791, TNA, C 107/104, ‘Loose Letters’, *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London, 1791-5*.

¹¹ *Debates; Day; Day*, 30 June 1784 (P.P. 1784, Vol. 15), p. 281.

¹² *Debates; Day; Day*, 30 June 1784 (P.P. 1784, Vol. 15), p. 281.

¹³ BT 1/89, ‘Answer of the Hat Manufacturers of London to the application of the Furriers’, *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 24 June 1814.

¹⁴ Ginsburg, *The Hat*, p. 69.

¹⁵ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21; and Ginsburg, *The Hat*, pp. 69, 89.

quality to ‘carroted’ parchment beaver.¹⁷ A small quantity of coat beaver therefore continued to be added to top-quality felt.

Alongside the implementation of new techniques into the hat-making process, further changes came in the organisation and geographic spread of the industry. There was a clear differentiation between metropolitan and provincial hat production in the first half of the eighteenth century. London dominated the manufacture of fine hats due to its skilled workforce and access to imported raw materials.¹⁸ Conversely, the provincial centres of Chester, Stockport, Manchester, Bristol, and Newcastle-Under-Lyme had a long tradition of making cheap and coarse felt hats.¹⁹ After 1750, the hats produced by these provincial centres were increasingly exported to the Americas as the colonies’ demand for cheap hats expanded. In order to make their hats cheaper and thus more effectively compete in Atlantic trade, London hatters began to establish links and bases in and around the borderlands of Lancashire and Cheshire in an effort to reduce labour costs, and so metropolitan hat production increasingly shifted to provincial regions.²⁰ As in the expansion of textile production in and around Manchester in the second half of the eighteenth century, the dual nature of the occupational activities of small farmers, whom often complemented agriculture with weaving or hatting, facilitated the provinces’ competitive advantage.²¹ London did, however, continue to excel in the making of the finest hats for domestic consumption and the higher-quality goods destined for the European export trade, although its role in the manufacturing of the cheaper varieties for the southern counties was gradually reduced to the finishing stages of production.²² In contrast, Stockport produced cheaper hats for domestic and foreign markets but its manufacture of finer hats was confined to the markets north of Manchester.²³

Increased hat production in and around Manchester in the second half of the eighteenth century was, therefore, intimately connected to metropolitan hat-making.²⁴ At first, these ties were in the form of agreements between London and provincial hatters, with the metropolitan firm extending raw materials on 12 months’ credit. While provincial manufactures were able to pay off a proportion of the credit by supplying hats,

¹⁷ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 21.

¹⁸ Corner, ‘Tyranny of Fashion’, p. 164.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, especially pp. 164-75.

they struggled to meet the requirement to make part of the return in cash.²⁵ London hatters looked to overcome such limitations by establishing their own provincial operations. Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of London and Stockport were one of the pioneers of this new form of organisation and their involvement in provincial hat manufacturing began in 1767 at Stockport.²⁶ In London, Davies & Co. managed their trade from a wholesale warehouse at Nicholas Lane and operated a manufactory on Tooley Street in Southwark.²⁷ The manufacturing was undertaken through several methods of production. The first was the use, by a few wealthy entrepreneurs, of centralised workshops that employed large numbers of workmen.²⁸ Finishing and dyeing were the main tasks undertaken by these large manufactories. For the less critical processes, the centralised workshops often put out materials on credit to smaller producers who performed the less critical processes.²⁹ Davies & Co.'s provincial manufacturing was conducted in a similar way and operated from High Street in Stockport, and the required beaver and musquash skins were delivered by sea via Liverpool.³⁰ While the sub-contracting of work to small farmers reduced labour costs, it reduced the firm's ability to respond rapidly to changing patterns of demand.³¹

The implementation of new techniques and the division of production between London and the provinces reduced costs. These developments became even more important as the price of beaver skins continued to rise at the end of the eighteenth century. Surviving correspondence between Davies & Co.'s London and Stockport operations shows that the high price of beaver was a constant concern. Writing from London in October 1784, J. Davis informed Thomas Evans in Stockport that 'you must be very sparing of your beaver it is so scarce and dear, there is not enough in the trade to serve till the importation comes'.³² Further letters in 1784, 1785, and 1791 again expressed dismay at the scarcity of beaver in the capital and urged the Stockport manufactory to be as prudent as possible in its use.³³

²⁵ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 159-60.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 159-60.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 167; and *Bailey's British Directory*, 1st Edition (1784).

³¹ Corner, 'Tyranny of Fashion', pp. 172-3.

³² 'J. Davis to Thomas Evans' 5 October 1784, TNA, C 107/104, 'Domestic Letter Book', *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London*, 1781-7.

³³ 'J. Davis to Thomas Evans' 9 November 1784 and 9 February 1785, TNA, C 107/104, 'Domestic Letter Book', *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London*, 1781-7; and 'George Martin to Davies

The introduction of a duty on the retailing of hats in 1784 — just one of a series of taxes on a wide array of consumer items levied by William Pitt the Younger — brought further challenges to the hat trade by increasing the price of hats. As well as requiring retailers to purchase an annual license to enable them to vend hats legally, the Act determined that the rate of Stamp duty to be paid was dependent upon the hat's value.³⁴ Charges ranged from 3d. per hat for hats worth less than 4s. and for those worth over 12s. the rate was 2s. per hat.³⁵ It was assumed that the tax would principally fall upon 'the opulent' as they used the greatest number of hats each year, while the poor wore cheaper hats and seldom purchased more than one every two years.³⁶ While Pitt supposed that the tax would return £150,000 a year to the Treasury, the actual proceeds were far below this amount.³⁷ From April 1786 to April 1787, the duties only generated revenues of £40,183.³⁸ Tax evasion by retailers was the main reason for these disappointing returns. By November 1785, the Feltmakers' Company moved to prosecute 'the many' offenders who were evading paying the hat duties as this practice was 'highly injurious to the fair Traders'.³⁹ A decade later, a reform was introduced that was intended to improve the collection of the duties by ending the use of stamped paper tickets and instead requiring that the actual paid duty was stamped onto the hats themselves.⁴⁰ The duty remained in place until 1811.⁴¹

When it came to selling their manufactured hats, Davies & Co. sold very few of them directly to consumers. Instead, they largely sold their hats to retailers either via their showroom at Nicholas Lane or through the use of salesmen who travelled on horseback around well-planned regional circuits to solicit provincial orders and collect bills.⁴² Other

& Co.' 5 April and 3 June 1791, TNA, C 107/104, 'Loose Letters', *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London*, 1791-5.

³⁴ *An Act for granting to His Majesty certain Duties on Licences, to be taken out by Persons vending Hats by Retail; and also certain Duties on Hats sold under such Licences; and for laying additional Duties on all Hats and Caps imported into this Kingdom* (P.P. 1784, C. 51), pp. 823-35.

³⁵ The imposed Stamp duties and the range of values that they applied to were as follows: 3d. per hat for those worth below 4s., 4s. per hat for those valued between 4s. and 7s., 1s. for those worth between 7s. and 12s., and 2s. for hats worth over 12s.. See *An Act for granting to His Majesty certain Duties on Licences, to be taken out by Persons vending Hats by Retail; and also certain Duties on Hats sold under such Licences; and for laying additional Duties on all Hats and Caps imported into this Kingdom* (P.P. 1784, C. 51), pp. 824-5.

³⁶ *Debates; Day; Day*, 30 June 1784 (P.P. 1784, Vol. 15), p. 281.

³⁷ *Debates; Day; Day*, 30 June 1784 (P.P. 1784, Vol. 15), p. 281.

³⁸ *An account of the total sums paid into the Exchequer, between the 5th April 1786 and the 5th April 1787* (P.P. 1787, Vol. 50), p. 405.

³⁹ Guildhall Library, MS01570/5, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book*, 1782-90, p. 164.

⁴⁰ *A bill for the better collection of the duty on hats* (P.P. 1795, Vol. 97), pp. 399-401.

⁴¹ *An Act for repealing the Hat Duty in Great Britain* (P.P. 1811, C. 70), pp. 408-9.

⁴² Corner, 'Tyranny of Fashion', pp. 167-8.

hat manufacturers such as Borradailes & Clark of London, who were often mentioned in Davies' correspondence, probably constructed their trade along similar lines. In the spring of 1784, for instance, Davies learned that Borradailes was monopolising orders from Edinburgh as a result of a new style and shape of hat invented by the rival firm.⁴³ Retailers in London and other large urban centres were more specialist than those in small towns and rural areas. It is clear from the surviving sales books of Francis Mouys & George Jarritt, hatters at 54 Pall Mall, and those of James Lock & Co., hatters at 6 St. James Street, that they exclusively sold hats.⁴⁴ For retailers in more isolated areas, hats were just one part of their inventory. In a letter to Davies in September 1791, John Sizer of Manningtree in Essex expressed his anxiety that the hats he had ordered may not arrive in time to replenish his stock and without them he feared that his trade would be greatly injured as his customers often purchased hats together with other items.⁴⁵

In the eighteenth century, hats were not merely an accessory but a staple of everyday dress.⁴⁶ Provincial consumers, particularly the more affluent ones, likely often purchased whole outfits at a time and a hat was an indispensable part of such transactions. It was, therefore, more expedient for rural retailers to stock a range of other wares alongside their hats than it was for their urban counterparts, the latter of whom were more likely to specialise in one particular item over diversifying their inventories. Abraham Dent, a grocer, mercer, and stationer in the small market town of Kirkby Stephen in Cumberland rarely sold hats but the ones that he did were either made out of cotton or satin.⁴⁷ This is significant as it suggests that it might be unusual for shopkeepers in rural market towns to stock expensive beaver hats and that the sale of such hats was the domain of London and large provincial towns. In London alone, *Kent's Directory* (1794) lists 178 tradespeople as being involved in the hat trade.⁴⁸ Almost one-third of these enterprises were described as 'hatters and hosiers' suggesting that in the capital it was just as likely

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴⁴ TNA, C 103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7; LMA, B/LK/350/A, 'Day Book', *Lock, James and Company*, 1783; and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

⁴⁵ 'John Sizer to Thomas Davies & Co.' 18 September 1791, TNA, C 107/104, 'Loose Letters', *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London*, 1791-5.

⁴⁶ Corner, 'Tyranny of Fashion', p. 153.

⁴⁷ T. S. Willan, *An Eighteenth Century Shopkeeper: Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), pp. 9, 13. While Dent sold groceries and stationary his business was never described as such in contemporary trade directories. See *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Of the 178 tradespeople: 55 (31 per cent) were listed as 'hatter and hosiers', 41 (23 per cent) as 'hatters', 35 (20 per cent) as 'hat-makers', 30 (17 per cent) as 'hat manufacturers', 7 (4 per cent) as particular kinds of 'hat warehouses', 5 (3 per cent) as 'hatters' and another trade, 3 (2 per cent) as 'makers of hosiery and hats', and 2 (1 per cent) as various kinds of 'hat pressers'. See *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

for hats to be sold alongside stockings as they were to be sold in specialist hat shops. While 23 per cent of the tradespeople were listed as ‘hatters’, a term that refers to the retailers of hats. James Lock & Co. were described as hatters in trade directories but from their records it does not appear that they directly made the hats they sold to their elite clientele, which included the likes of Lord Bathurst, William Wilberforce, the Duke of Marlborough, and many other high profile individuals.⁴⁹ The terms ‘hat-maker’ and ‘hat-manufacturer’ were also prolific and together they composed 37 per cent of the 178 tradespeople, which demonstrates London’s continued role as a major centre of hat production.⁵⁰

The *Directory of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead* (1801) suggests that the combination of ‘hatter and hosier’ was similarly visible in provincial urban centres. A total of 17 tradespeople listed in the directory were connected to the hatting industry in one form or another.⁵¹ Four were described as ‘hatters and hosiers’, which accounts for almost one-quarter of the firms. ‘Hatters’ were more prevalent, however, with a total of nine (53 per cent) tradespeople described as such.⁵² While a degree of caution needs to be taken with these findings due to the different authors of the directories and the possible selective nature of the entries contained therein, it appears to have been the case that hat retailers in Newcastle and Gateshead were more specialised than their average metropolitan counterpart. On the other hand, there were very few hat manufacturers in Newcastle and Gateshead; only two tradespeople were listed as ‘hat-manufacturers’ and one as a ‘hat-maker’.⁵³

As in other high-end luxury trades, London dominated the retail trade in beaver hats. This was not primarily because of the capital’s easy access to imported beaver or a result of the city’s large population but rather the enduring tendency for elite consumers to conduct much of their shopping during ‘the season’ (from winter to early spring) when they left their country estates and converged on the metropolis in their thousands.⁵⁴ Indeed, the principal market for beaver hats was amongst the aristocracy, military, and

⁴⁹ LMA, B/LK/350/A, ‘Day Book’, *Lock, James and Company*, 1783, fos. 18, 37, 99; and *Kent’s Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794). Lock & Co. would later introduce the ‘Bowler’ hat which became a hallmark of Victorian Britain. See Ginsburg, *The Hat*, pp. 86-7.

⁵⁰ *Kent’s Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

⁵¹ *Directory of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed and sold by J. Mitchell, Dean Street, 1801).

⁵² This does not include one ‘hatter and furrier’.

⁵³ *Directory of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed and sold by J. Mitchell, Dean Street, 1801).

⁵⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 263.

emergent middling sorts. In January 1783, Lock & Co. sold a fine beaver hat with a silver band and decorated with silver lace to Lieutenant Watson of the 52nd Regiment at Chatham Barracks for £2 9s..⁵⁵ In that same month a fine beaver hat worth £1 1s. was sold to the Duke of Manchester and another was sold to the Reverend Holcomb of Parliament Square.⁵⁶ While the Duke of Manchester certainly would have been an elite provincial who had come to London for ‘the season’, plenty of elite consumers remained in London throughout the year. Analysis of the only surviving customer account book of the Pall Mall hatters Mouys & Jarritt which covers the years 1802-7, reveals the similar mass of landed gentry, military officers, parliamentarians, esquires, and religious leaders.⁵⁷ Since the account book covers several years, it can be used to track the frequency with which regular patrons purchased beaver hats. Lord Morpeth was Mouys & Jarritt’s most fervent customer of beaver hats. In May 1803, Morpeth purchased ‘a black beaver bonnett trimmed with ostrich feather[,] band and ribbon [and a] box’. for £1 1s..⁵⁸ Morpeth purchased similarly decorated beaver hats in July 1803, in April, July, August, and September the following year, and in April and September 1806.⁵⁹ Morpeth purchased many of his hats outside of ‘the season’, so it is apparent that he was a permanent resident in London at this time. In all, during the six years covered by the accounts, Morpeth purchased 10 beaver hats from Mouys & Jarritt.⁶⁰ While it cannot be said with certainty as to whether each of these hats was for Morpeth’s personal use, it is probable that most of them were and that his purchases reflect the high turnover of luxury apparel amongst elite consumers.

Changes in fashion became more rapid as the eighteenth century progressed. In Victorian Britain, it was the finishes applied to men’s hats — namely top hats — that varied most, whereas in the eighteenth century it was the actual style of hat that was ever-changing.⁶¹ Men’s hat fashions in the early to mid-eighteenth century were dominated by three- and two-cornered hats, more commonly known today as ‘tricorne’ and ‘bicorné’ hats.⁶² There were many different styles of tricorne hats over the century but after 1780 it

⁵⁵ LMA, B/LK/350/A, ‘Day Book’, *Lock, James and Company*, 1783, fo. 2.

⁵⁶ LMA, B/LK/350/A, ‘Day Book’, *Lock, James and Company*, 1783, fos. 3, 25.

⁵⁷ See TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7; and *Kent’s Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

⁵⁸ TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7, fo. 5.

⁵⁹ TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7, fos. 5, 117.

⁶⁰ This discounts one beaver hat that was expressly stated as being purchased by Lord Morpeth for another gentleman. See TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7, fo. 5.

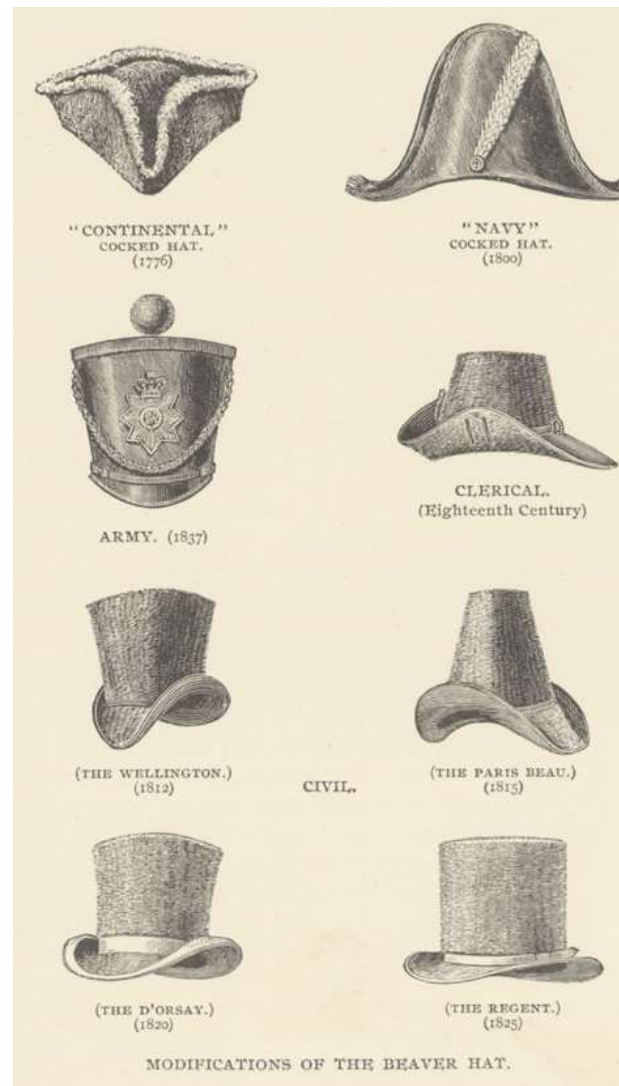
⁶¹ Ginsburg, *The Hat*, pp. 57, 74, 76, 85.

⁶² C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 234-7.

Figure 5.1. Men's hat styles, c.1780-1820.

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Notes: The hats pictured in the top left corner includes: a) Fantail hat; b) Round hat and queue turned up; c) Round hat with hatband and buckles; d) Fantail hat, wig with catogan queue (all 1786). The hats shown in the bottom left corner are various shapes of round hats (1790s). On the right are several styles of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century beaver hats.

Source: Cunnington and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 235, 238; and Horace T. Martin, *Castorologia or the History and Traditions of the Canadian Beaver* (London: Edward Stanford, 1892), p. 125.

was the 'fantail' hat that was the more fashionable, two examples of which are shown in Figure 5.1.⁶³ The more well-known Bicorné or 'cocked' hats were widely used in the military and for use on horseback.⁶⁴ By the end of the century, tricorné hats had fallen out of favour and were largely replaced by the so-called 'round' hat, which was a style that

⁶³ Ibid., p. 236.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 237. For an example of a cocked hat used by officers in the Royal Navy see Figure 5.1.

first came into fashion as a riding hat during the 1770s.⁶⁵ Figure 5.1 shows several different forms of round hat but they all shared a round, flat-topped crown, and a flat, uncocked brim, and were usually made out of black beaver, although white beaver was sometimes used.⁶⁶ Indeed, in the early nineteenth century, Mouys & Jarritt sold far more round hats than they did pure ‘beaver’ hats but it is clear that at over £1 per hat, round hats contained a significant amount of beaver.⁶⁷ After 1800, top hats (a form of round hat) gradually emerged as the predominant fashion in male headwear and their popularity would continue well into the early twentieth century.⁶⁸

Beaver hats were not only worn by men, however. Women were important consumers as well and it is unfortunate that the existing historiography of the fur trade has ignored this fact.⁶⁹ It is true to say that, for women, the demand for beaver hats was decidedly less than it was for men, a circumstance that arose from the strong demand for hats amongst the military and the wider range of materials used in the making of women’s hats. All three of the hatters’ records used in this study show a significant trade in women’s hats. In November 1785, Davies & Co. sent six fancy ‘ladies hats’ that were ‘trimmed in the most fashionable taste’ to the Barbados merchants George Henry and William Thompson Armstrong.⁷⁰ Lock & Co. sold a fine beaver hat worth £1 1s. to Lady Morton at Parke Square in February 1787.⁷¹ A Miss Flint who was resident at the Earl of Dartmouth’s property at Berkeley Square ordered ‘a lady’s black beaver bonnet trimmed with ribbon’ for 13s. from Mouys & Jarritt in February 1803, and there were many more instances of men ordering women’s beaver hats from the Pall Mall hatters, presumably as a gift for their loved ones.⁷²

At the close of the eighteenth century, fashionable women’s hats generally had large or tall crowns, but the vogue began to shift to styles that were smaller after 1795 (See

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 87, 238.

⁶⁷ For instance, in December 1802 General Horneck at Warrens Hotel purchased ‘a fine round hat and stamp’ for £1 6s. and did so again in the same month of the following year. See TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7, fo. 7.

⁶⁸ Ginsburg, *The Hat*, p. 85; and C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 60, 70, 74. Also see Figure 5.1.

⁶⁹ For example, see Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, pp. 15-6.

⁷⁰ ‘Thomas Davies & Co. to George Henry Thompson and William Thompson Armstrong’ 12 November 1785, TNA, C 107/104, ‘Foreign Letter Book’, *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London*, 1771-92.

⁷¹ LMA, B/LK/350/A, ‘Day Book’, *Lock, James and Company*, 1783, fo. 46.

⁷² TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt*, 1802-7, fo. 29.

Figure 5.2. Women's hat styles, c.1780-1820

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Notes: Top left is a cocked riding hat (1787). Bottom left is a large cocked riding hat (1787). The middle image is an example of walking attire that consists of a stone-coloured habit trimmed with swansdown, a black beaver or sealskin hat, a large bear or sealskin muff, a pair of black kid sandals, and white stockings (1813). On the right is a riding dress composed of a bright green habit with military trimming, a small black beaver riding hat, a pair of black half-boots laced with green, and a pair of York tan gloves (1812).

Source: Cunnington and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 358-9; and Cunnington and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 382.

Figure 5.2).⁷³ The most prolific hats for women made from beaver were so-called 'riding hats' that formed an essential part of the 'riding habit' that was a key feature of the elite female wardrobe at this time.⁷⁴ Indeed, metropolitan retailers often directly addressed the

⁷³ Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 364.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 366-8. On the 'riding habit' specifically see *Ibid.*, pp. 304-10.

‘nobility and gentry’ when advertising the sale of riding habits and hats.⁷⁵ Despite its name, riding habits and their associated hats were used as much for morning walks and other occasions as they were for riding.⁷⁶ Like they were for men, cocked styles of women’s riding hats were very popular from 1777 to 1790, and women also commonly wore round hats after 1800.⁷⁷ The range of materials used in the production of women’s hats does appear to have been broader than was the case for men’s hats. Materials included beaver, felt, straw, leghorn, chip, silk, satin, and velvet, although it has been suggested that beaver was less frequently used after 1820.⁷⁸

The wearing of beaver hats by women did, in certain circumstances, attract criticism. On 1 January 1783, a correspondent for *The Morning Herald* argued that it was ridiculous for the prevailing fashion amongst young women to be the wearing of riding habits and hats on the streets of London and in the playhouses.⁷⁹ The correspondent maintained that the wearing of them to church was, however, wholly ‘irreverent and indecent’ and that it was particularly shocking for a Lady to wear a slouch beaver hat in the House of God, and contended that the clergy ought to insist that the hats were removed.⁸⁰ It was, at this time, traditional for women in Christian societies to cover their heads upon entering a church, yet there was clearly an etiquette about the style of such headwear.⁸¹ The commentary generated a pointed discussion that later expanded to include whether it was proper for men to wear their boots to church. A mocking reply from ‘A Soldier I am for the Ladies’ at ‘Riding-Hat-Lane’ did not ‘pretend to determine whether ladies *pray* best in beaver or chip hats’ and proposed that the correspondent could bring into fashion a dedicated church hat.⁸² Maria, another reader who wrote to the paper, dismissed the nonsense espoused by the supposed ‘soldier’ accusing them of being a hatter and stating that she would never be ‘guilty of the gay decorum’ of wearing a habit or a slouch beaver to church nor her husband of wearing his boots.⁸³ This barbed conversation in the national

⁷⁵ For instance, see *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 26 April 1783; and *The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 19 May 1783.

⁷⁶ Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 366-8.

⁷⁷ Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 364-5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-5, 382, 396.

⁷⁹ *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 1 January 1783.

⁸⁰ *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 1 January 1783.

⁸¹ Ginsburg, *The Hat*, p. 10.

⁸² *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 2 January 1783.

⁸³ *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 7 January 1783.

press reveals a distain and mistrust of shopkeepers, and echoes earlier debates about the corrupting influence of luxury on the nation's morals.⁸⁴

Beaver hats were also worn by the children of affluent families. Children as young as four years old were often dressed in a similar way to their father or mother.⁸⁵ Thomas Davies & Co. produced 'black mock beaver' hats in a number of different age ranges, such as four to five and six to eight years old.⁸⁶ Children's beaver hats were a regular item sold by Mouys & Jarritt. For instance, in April 1805 the Pall Mall hatters sold two black beaver hats for the daughters of Mrs Duffield of Mount Street, Mayfair.⁸⁷

Demand for beaver hats amongst men, women, and children from the upper and middling sorts was largely sustained during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; silk hats did not seriously begin to supplant the use of beaver hats until after 1830. The high price of beaver presented British hat manufacturers with challenges, and these difficulties were evident in the 1780s and continued into the 1790s, although innovation within the industry and the use of musquash skins as a substitute for beaver brought some relief. Certainly, in the early nineteenth century, London and Southwark hat manufacturers demonstrated their sensitivity to the price of coney and hare skins, as is evident in their criticism of the metropolitan furriers' attempts to have the ban on the dyeing of coney and hare skins lifted.⁸⁸ While it is possible that wholesale fur-dealers made an intervention to help bring about a merger between the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies as E. E. Rich suggests, no evidence of such a move has been found during the course of this study.⁸⁹ A union between the two companies would, however, have stabilised beaver imports by reducing the over-trapping of beaver in North America, and London's hat manufacturers zealously defended their own interests. In the fur trade — unlike in the debate over the EIC's Charter in 1812-3 — provincial ports or manufacturers did not seek easier access to supplies of raw materials. Provincial and metropolitan hat makers had common interests and there were close links between the

⁸⁴ On the eighteenth-century luxury debates see Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates and Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 7-27.

⁸⁵ Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 410-5.

⁸⁶ 'Richard Simpson to Thomas Davies & Co.' 21 November 1791, TNA, C 107/104, 'Loose Letters', *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London, 1791-5*.

⁸⁷ TNA, C/103/191, *Mouys v Jarritt, 1802-7*, fo. 13.

⁸⁸ The hatters maintained that since 1 January 1814 they had been forced to import 20,000 lbs. of coney and hare wool from Holland even though it was inferior in quality to that made in England. See BT 1/89, 'Answer of the Hat Manufacturers of London to the application of the Furriers', *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 24 June 1814.

⁸⁹ Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 2*, p. 385.

two groups, as show in the expansion of hat production in and around Manchester and much of this investment was supplied by London hat manufacturers. There was no opposition to the continuation of the HBC's monopoly from provincial regions and the *de facto* extension of the Company's monopoly in 1821 was left entirely to the discretion of metropolitan forces.

II. *The Global Trade in British Hats*

By 1780 the number of British settlers and their descendants in the Americas totalled around 2.3 million.⁹⁰ This was a substantial export market for British manufacturers of beaver hats and it was one that was protected by mercantilist regulations that restricted colonial production and exportation of felt and hats. Such legislation ensured that the colonies' demand for British produced hats remained high.⁹¹ Overseas demand for beaver hats was not, however, solely confined to the British Atlantic or the British in the Orient. From the shores of West Africa, to Spanish Valparaiso, to Portuguese Brazil, British beaver hats were exported to markets across the world. While the beaver hat was the height of fashion amongst Britain's ruling elite, its appeal spread far beyond the upper echelons of British society. The beaver hat was a symbol of distinction and respectability but it was also an emblem of authority that was much desired by the ruling and mercantile classes of colonial plantation economies.

During the mid-eighteenth century the British export trade in beaver and felt hats underwent a number of significant changes. The first was the decline in exports of beaver hats. From the 1740s through to early 1760s around half a million beaver hats were exported from Britain each year.⁹² After 1762 the volume of the trade sharply decreased however, and in 1772 only 250,000 beaver hats were exported.⁹³ In contrast, exports of felt hats gradually increased, rising from 200,000 a year in 1740 to around 300,000 in 1760.⁹⁴ Exports of felt hats continued to rise until their peak in 1772 when 650,000 were exported.⁹⁵ In the case of both beaver and felt hats, the changes in their export trades occurred as British hat production shifted from London to provincial regions. It was not

⁹⁰ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 36.

⁹¹ Carlos and Lewis, *Frozen Sea*, p. 28; and Lawson, 'Beaver Hat', p. 34.

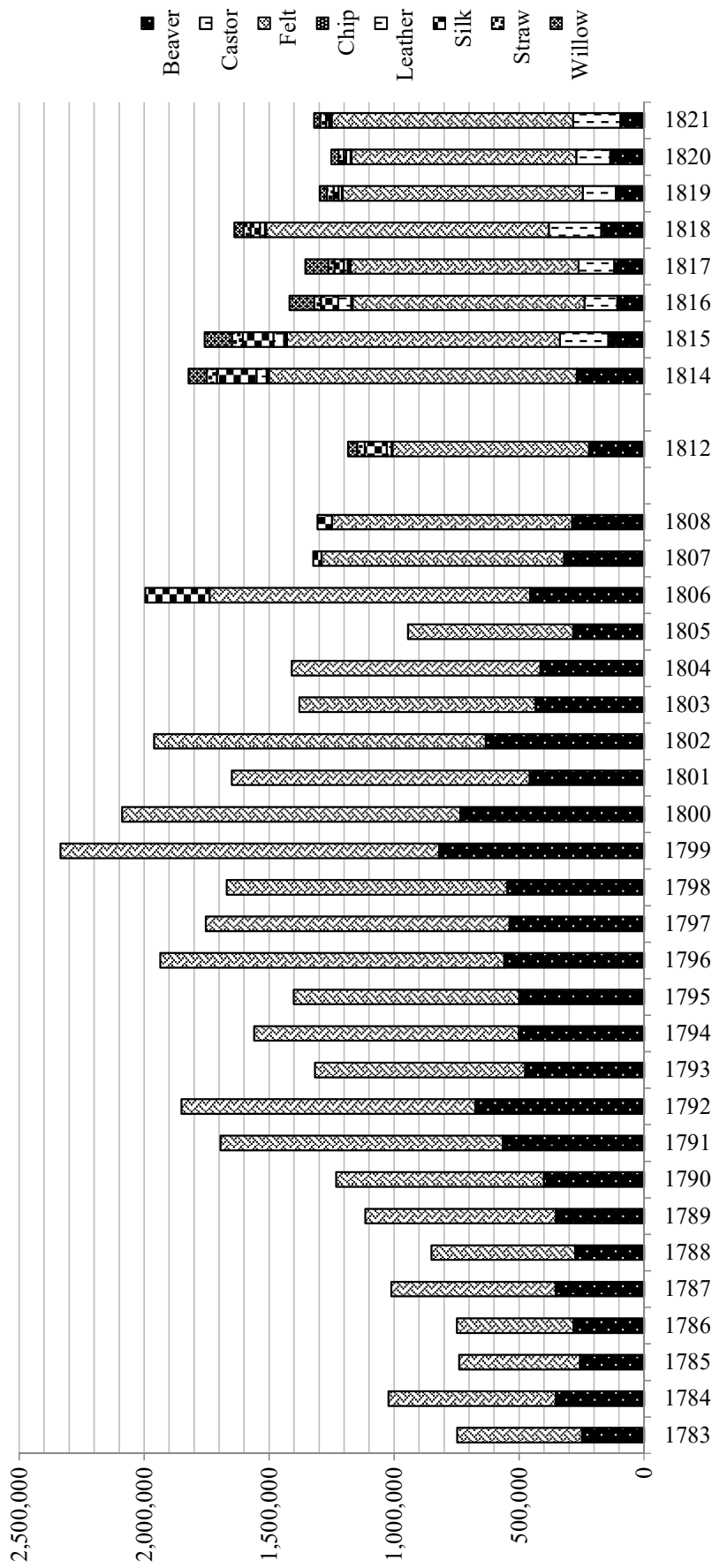
⁹² Corner, 'Tyranny of Fashion', p. 156.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Figure 5.3. Annual number of hats exported from Britain to all parts of the world by type, 1783-1821.



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

until after 1783 that the British export of beaver hats began to recover. Figure 5.3 shows the annual number of hats that were exported from Britain to all parts of the world delineated by type of hat. Prior to 1806, only 'beaver' and 'felt' hats were listed in the British customs' records. In this year silk hats were listed for the first time and, in the following years, castor, chip, leather, straw, and willow hats were added to the listings. While exports of beaver hats increased after 1783, this recovery was not a smooth one. Only between 1788 and 1792 did beaver hat exports increase year on year. This was followed by a largely stagnant period in 1793-8 but exports sharply rose in 1799 to reach a high point of 820,000 hats.⁹⁶ This year was also the peak year for exports of felt hats, with just over 1.5 million exported in that year. In total, 2.3 million hats were exported from Britain at the close of the eighteenth century and exports in the early nineteenth century did not exceed this number.

From 1800 onwards the trade in beaver hats gradually declined once again, although if castor hats are included alongside beaver hats there was a slight reversal of this trend after 1815. More striking during the period of this study was the surge in felt hat exports. From 1789 through to 1804, exports of felt hats were never below 760,000 and were routinely above 1.1 million. While the worst years of warfare in Europe and North America brought about a decline, up to 1821 the number of felt hats exported each year remained around 1 million. Between 1783 and 1821, therefore, British exports of felt hats saw their largest period of growth and this increased volume of trade was largely sustained throughout the period. In contrast, exports of beaver and castor hats were more erratic and although there was a recovery in exports to a volume in excess of that exported in the mid-eighteenth century, this revival was temporary. The exports of other sorts of hats that were added to the customs' records in the first two decades of the nineteenth century were usually small and irregular. The most important of these minor exports were silk hats. In 1806, just over 230,000 silk hats were exported from Britain and this was their peak export year. Well over 100,000 silk hats were exported in 1814 and 1815 but the number declined thereafter so that only 12,471 were exported in 1821. In the case of the other hats, for the nine years after 1812 when they were listed in the customs' records, an average 2,714 chip, 7,888 leather, 29,550 straw, and 58,171 willow hats were exported

⁹⁶ Figure 5.3.

Table 5.1. Average annual number of hats exported from Britain to all parts of the world by continent, 1783-1821.

	Beaver & Castor Hats						Felt Hats					
	Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	New South Wales	Total	Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	New South Wales	Total
1783-7	1,673 (1%)	177,019 (63%)	64,458 (23%)	36,945 (13%)	0 (0%)	280,094	52,684 (9%)	444,584 (80%)	34,727 (6%)	23,146 (4%)	0 (0%)	555,140
1788-92	2,047 (0%)	311,980 (69%)	88,375 (19%)	51,397 (11%)	48 (0%)	453,847	64,298 (7%)	733,673 (82%)	52,392 (6%)	44,099 (5%)	48 (0%)	894,510
1793-7	6,636 (1%)	376,308 (73%)	104,654 (20%)	24,506 (5%)	2,664 (1%)	514,769	30,713 (3%)	949,831 (88%)	60,034 (6%)	36,600 (3%)	1,464 (0%)	1,078,641
1798-1802	15,255 (2%)	456,260 (71%)	116,146 (18%)	49,999 (8%)	1,069 (0%)	638,729	72,235 (6%)	1,062,386 (82%)	71,011 (5%)	93,807 (7%)	2,201 (0%)	1,301,640
1803-7	7,088 (2%)	270,577 (71%)	56,288 (15%)	46,801 (12%)	768 (0%)	381,521	43,992 (5%)	776,188 (80%)	24,078 (2%)	125,666 (13%)	974 (0%)	970,898
1808-12	9,109 (4%)	141,472 (56%)	39,820 (16%)	62,161 (24%)	1,514 (1%)	254,074	20,877 (2%)	665,092 (76%)	48,803 (6%)	136,316 (16%)	2,490 (0%)	873,578
1814-7	10,157 (4%)	187,994 (68%)	21,383 (8%)	56,611 (20%)	510 (0%)	276,654	28,216 (3%)	895,320 (86%)	27,488 (3%)	89,455 (9%)	456 (0%)	1,040,934
1818-21	12,780 (4%)	242,092 (82%)	11,268 (4%)	27,858 (9%)	1,255 (0%)	292,252	30,114 (3%)	828,851 (84%)	27,154 (3%)	100,874 (10%)	2,367 (0%)	989,360
Overall Average	8,093 (3%)	270,463 (70%)	62,799 (16%)	44,535 (12%)	978 (0%)	386,867	44,141 (5%)	794,491 (82%)	43,211 (4%)	81,245 (8%)	1,250 (0%)	963,088

Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

each year.⁹⁷ From this initial survey of British hat exports it is apparent that it was felt rather than silk hats that provided the main competition for beaver hats in foreign markets.

In terms of the geographic distribution of exports, the Americas were by far the leading market. As is shown in Table 5.1, an overall annual average of 270,000 beaver and castor hats were exported to the Americas each year and this accounted for 70 per cent of all British exports of these sorts of hats. With a share of 82 per cent, the Americas took an even greater proportion of British felt hat exports. For beaver and castor hats, the second most important export destination was 'Asia', namely India. On average each year 62,799 beaver and castor hats were exported to Asia, a figure that accounts for 16 per cent of such exports. At only 4 per cent, however, Asia took the lowest share of felt hats. Europe was the third highest market for beaver and castor hats, with 12 per cent of such exports going to Continental Europe over the period or an annual average of 44,535.⁹⁸ With regard to felt hats, Europe accounted for 8 per cent of total exports and was the second highest market after the Americas. The third largest market for felt hats was Africa, although only 5 per cent were exported to this market, and the continent took a lower share of the exported beaver and castor hats (3 per cent). Australia or more specifically the colony of New South Wales — referred to as 'New Holland' in the customs' records — did not become a significant market for beaver or felt hats until after 1830.⁹⁹

Throughout the period there were a number of key changes in the composition of the British hat export trade to each of the four major continents. The Americas was always the principal market for British exports of beaver and castor hats. As is shown in Table 5.2, exports of such hats expanded from an average of 177,000 each year in 1783-7 to 456,000 in 1798-1802. While exports declined to an annual average of 141,000 in 1808-12 they subsequently increased once more, reaching 242,000 by 1818-21.¹⁰⁰ As is shown in Figure 5.4, between 1783 and 1792 the majority of beaver and castor hats exported to the Americas went to the United States. The new republic took over 60 per cent of British beaver hat exports to the Americas and this trade was increasing, rising from an annual average of 110,000 hats in 1783-7 to 167,000 hats in 1787-92.¹⁰¹ Exports of beaver hats

⁹⁷ Excluding 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House.

⁹⁸ Includes exports to Turkey.

⁹⁹ See the 'hats, haberdashery, garments etc.' category in the tables of British exports contained in Davis, *British Overseas Trade*, pp. 94-101.

¹⁰⁰ See Table 5.2.

¹⁰¹ See Figure 5.4.

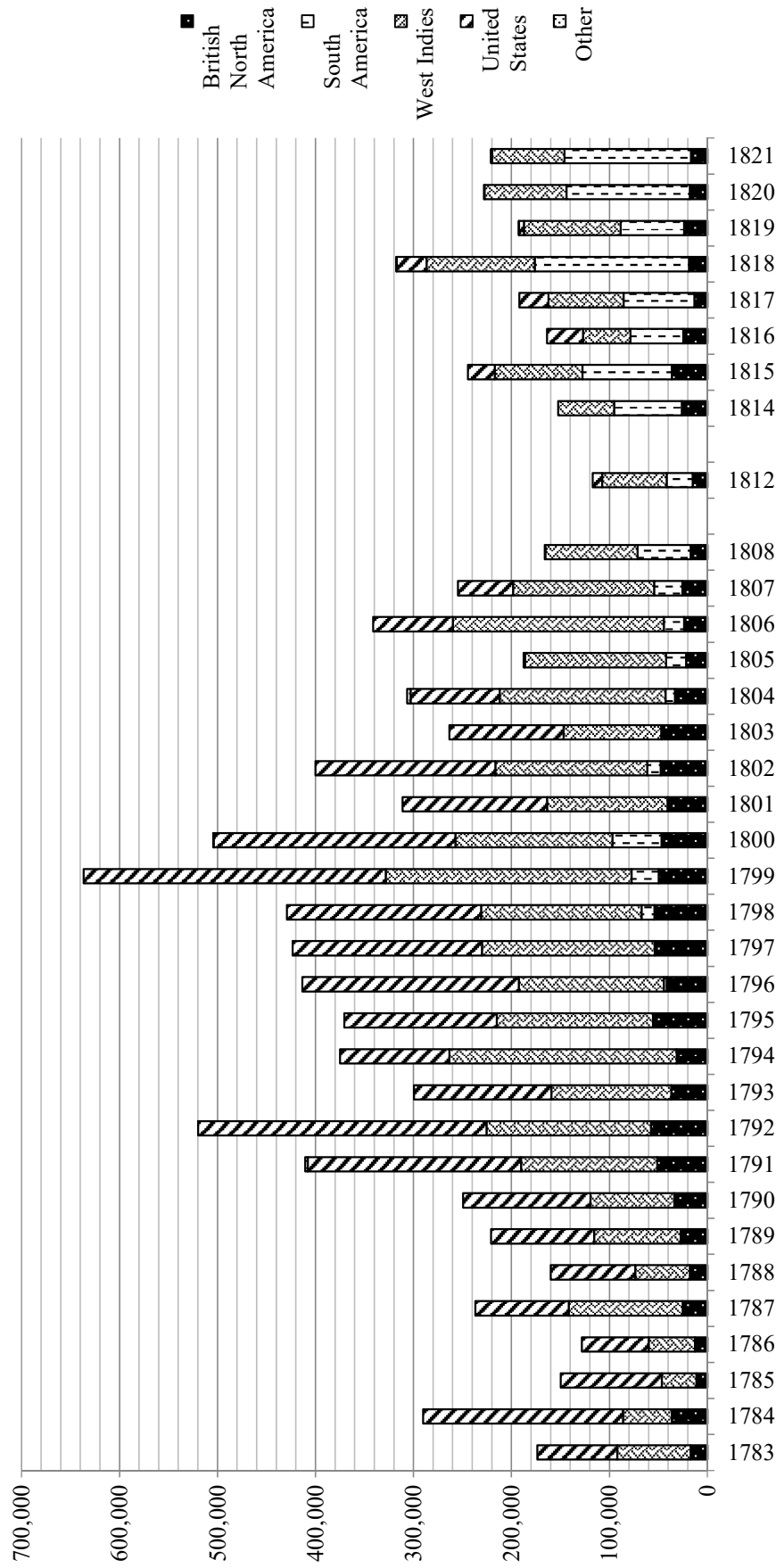
Table 5.2. Average annual number of beaver/castor hats and felt hats exported from Britain to all parts of the world by continent, 1783-1821.

	Africa			Americas			Asia			Europe		
	Beaver & Castor	Felt	Total	Beaver & Castor	Felt	Total	Beaver & Castor	Felt	Total	Beaver & Castor	Felt	Total
1783-7	1,673 (3%)	52,684 (97%)	54,356	177,019 (28%)	444,584 (72%)	621,603	64,458 (65%)	34,727 (35%)	106,010	36,945 (61%)	23,146 (39%)	60,090
1788-92	2,047 (3%)	64,298 (97%)	66,442	311,980 (30%)	733,673 (70%)	1,045,653	88,375 (63%)	52,392 (37%)	140,767	51,397 (54%)	44,099 (46%)	95,496
1793-7	6,636 (18%)	30,713 (82%)	41,477	376,308 (28%)	949,831 (72%)	1,326,139	104,654 (64%)	60,034 (36%)	164,688	24,506 (40%)	36,600 (60%)	61,106
1798-1802	15,255 (17%)	72,235 (83%)	90,760	456,260 (30%)	1,062,386 (70%)	1,518,646	116,146 (62%)	71,011 (38%)	187,156	49,999 (35%)	93,807 (65%)	143,806
1803-7	7,088 (14%)	43,992 (86%)	52,822	270,577 (26%)	776,188 (74%)	1,046,765	56,288 (70%)	24,078 (30%)	80,366	46,801 (27%)	125,666 (73%)	172,467
1808-12	9,109 (30%)	20,877 (70%)	33,989	141,472 (18%)	655,092 (82%)	806,564	39,820 (45%)	48,803 (55%)	88,623	62,161 (31%)	136,316 (69%)	198,477
1814-7	10,157 (26%)	28,216 (74%)	39,339	187,994 (17%)	895,320 (83%)	1,083,314	21,383 (44%)	27,488 (56%)	48,870	56,611 (39%)	89,455 (61%)	146,065
1818-21	12,780 (30%)	30,114 (70%)	46,516	242,092 (23%)	828,851 (77%)	1,070,943	11,268 (29%)	27,154 (71%)	38,421	27,858 (22%)	100,874 (78%)	128,732
Overall Average	8,093 (16%)	270,463 (70%)	50,984	270,180 (25%)	794,491 (75%)	1,064,953	62,799 (59%)	43,211 (41%)	106,010	44,535 (35%)	81,245 (65%)	125,780

Notes: Exports to New South Wales have not been included. There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814.

Source: TNA, CUST 1718-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 81-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

Figure 5.4. Annual number of beaver and castor hats exported from Britain to the Americas by destination, 1783-1821.



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'other' category includes California, Columbia River, Nootka Sound, and the Pacific North-West Coast of North America.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

to the United States increased further in the final years of the eighteenth century, reaching an average of 217,000 hats a year in 1798-1802. The number of beaver and castor hats exported to the United States rapidly declined in the initial decades of the nineteenth century however. Only an average of 5,058 beaver and castor hats were exported to the republic each year in 1803-7 and even with the improvement of Anglo-American relations after 1815, the average number exported in 1818-21 was only 9,253; a mere 4 per cent of total beaver hat exports to the Americas. Further analysis into the individual states to which beaver hats were exported reveals that the principal demand for such apparel was in more rural regions where country plantations predominated. As Figure 5.5 shows, Virginia (34 per cent) and the Carolinas (34 per cent) accounted for well over half of the beaver hats exported to the United States over the entire period.¹⁰² Felt hat exports also declined. An average of 451,000 felt hats were annually exported from Britain to the United States in 1798-1802 but the averages were only 18,173 in 1808-12, 46,605 in 1813-7, and 24,894 in 1818-21.

There was, therefore, a major shift in the British export trade in beaver and castor hats to the Americas over the period of this study. While the United States took the vast majority of British beaver hat exports in the late eighteenth century, in the early nineteenth century it accounted for very few. Ultimately, this shift was the result of the development of hat manufacturing within the United States following the Declaration of Independence. Danbury, Connecticut, quickly became a hub of hat production within the new republic and one of its first felt hat manufactories was established by Zadoc Benedict in 1780.¹⁰³ By 1800, Philadelphia had emerged as a major hat-producing centre, the output from which was valued at \$1 million a year.¹⁰⁴ The decline in trade between Britain and the United States prior to and during the War of 1812 enabled these emergent industries to capture the US market at the expense of British hat manufacturers. Indeed, this decline mirrors that seen in other commodity trades and supports the view that significant changes in Anglo-American trade occurred in the early nineteenth century rather than immediately after the independence of the United States.¹⁰⁵ George William Wood of the Manchester merchant firm Thomas, Phillips & Co., which was probably the major exporter of hats to New York and Philadelphia, stated to a Parliamentary Committee in 1808 that the firms'

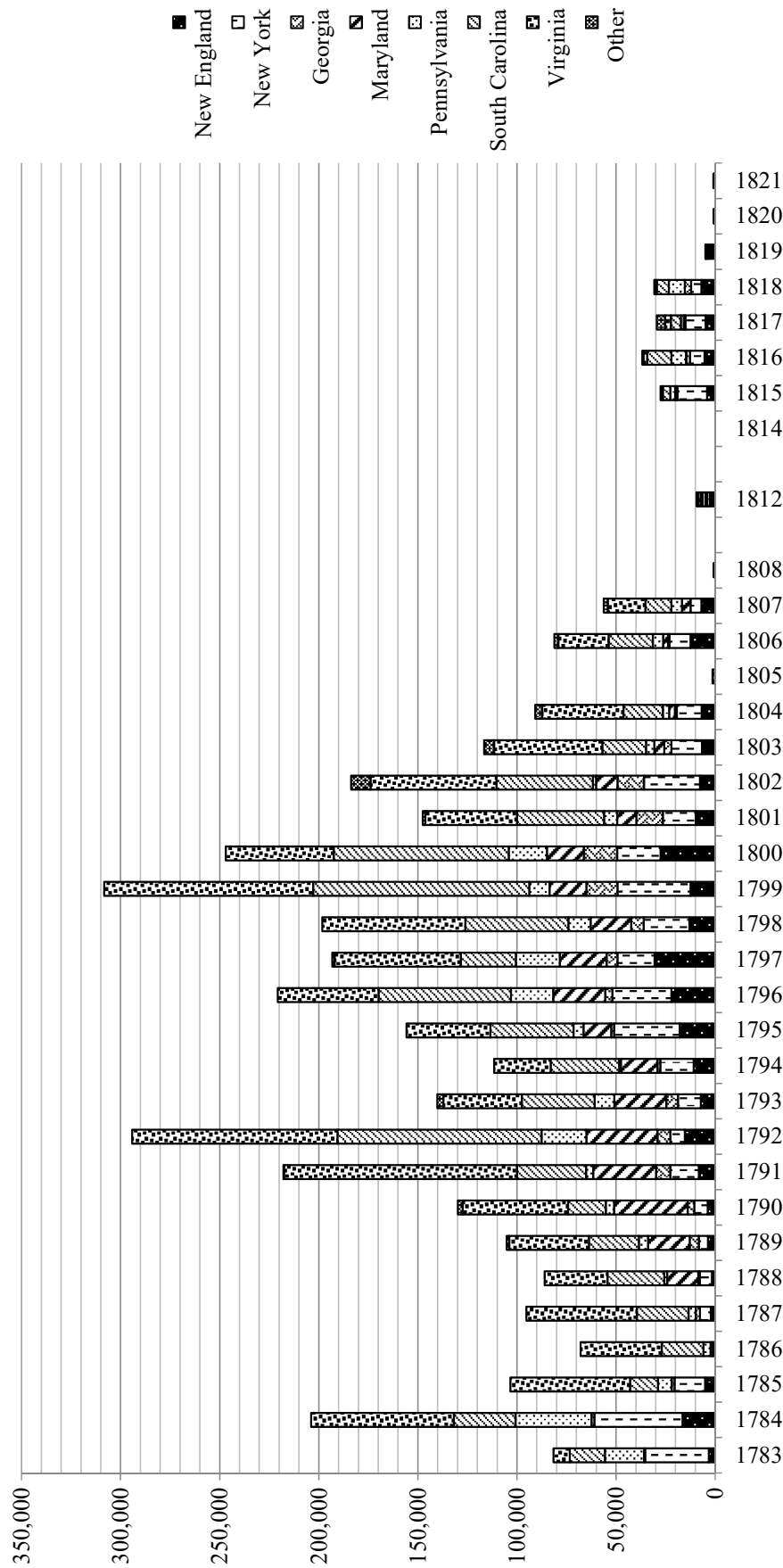
¹⁰² Very few beaver and castor hats were exported to North Carolina. Over the whole period only 24,440 beaver and castor hats were recorded as being exported to this State.

¹⁰³ Ginsburg, *The Hat*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁵ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, pp. 10, 243, 249.

Figure 5.5. Annual number of beaver and castor hats exported from Britain to the United States by destination, 1783-1821.



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

hat exports to the United States were in decline as a result of the growth in American hat manufacturing.¹⁰⁶

In the case of the West Indies, the pattern of trade was somewhat different. The number of beaver hats exported to the West Indies increased by two-thirds between 1783-7 and 1788-92, rising from an annual average of 64,650 to 107,000 hats. At this time the West Indies share of the British export trade in beaver hats accounted for just under 40 per cent of the total number exported to the Americas. Exports of beaver hats to the Caribbean were almost one-and-a-half times greater in 1792-7 and they stayed at an annual average of around 165,000 between 1792 through to 1807. As a result of the troubles in the export trade to the United States, from 1803-12, the West Indies took nearly 65 per cent of the beaver hats exported to the Americas. This increased significance did not last. By the end of the period, the volume of the trade had returned to that of the 1780s, so that the number of beaver and castor hats exported to the West Indies now averaged 91,658 each year. Some of this decline in hat exports may be attributable to the long-term deterioration in the British West Indian economy following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. The extent and timing of this decline is, however, a deeply contested issue. Some historians situate the start of the decline in 1775 with the outbreak of the American War of Independence, while others argue that the decline began in 1800, 1807, or even 1815.¹⁰⁷ Even so, the decline in hat exports to the West Indies at this time was primarily because the British West Indies ceased to function as a way for British manufactures to access South American markets.

Iberian America was a large market for fashionable European textiles and clothing, which was not only on account of its large population (around 17.5 million in 1785) but the fact that in places such as Mexico City and Lima the demand for such manufactures

¹⁰⁶ *Minutes of evidence, upon taking into consideration several petitions, presented to the House of Commons, respecting the orders in council* (P.P. 1808, Vol. X.81), pp. 1-9.

¹⁰⁷ On the so-called 'decline thesis' see in particular Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, Second Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); J. J. McCusker, 'The Economy of the British West Indies, 1763-1790: Growth, Stagnation, or Decline?' in J. J. McCusker, *Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic World* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 310-30; Lowell J. Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean 1763-1833: A Study in Social and Economy History* (London: The Century Co., 1928); David Beck Ryden, 'Does Decline Make Sense? The West Indian Economy and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2001), pp. 347-74; J. R. Ward, 'The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1978), pp. 197-213; and J. R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834: The Process of Amelioration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

was present amongst non-whites and the less affluent.¹⁰⁸ This demand extended to beaver and felt hats.¹⁰⁹ In the late eighteenth century, British hat manufacturers continued to try and maintain markets for their products within Spanish and Portuguese America, as can be seen in their attempts to have their interests considered during the negotiation of a commercial treaty with Portugal in 1787.¹¹⁰ With the establishment of a number of ‘free ports’ in the British West Indies from 1766 onwards, British hats could — in the eyes of the British legislature — be legally exported to the West Indies and thence shipped to Spanish colonies in the Americas, usually by way of Spanish ships.¹¹¹ Despite the liberalisation of Spanish Atlantic trade during the second half of the eighteenth century, Spain refused to allow foreign merchants to travel to its overseas colonies and continued to prohibit trade between Spanish America and the British West Indies into the nineteenth century.¹¹² After 1800, however, there was less need for the British West Indies to serve as a gateway to Spanish America as some, albeit temporary, direct trade was made possible by Spanish colonial revolutionaries opening their ports to foreign merchants.¹¹³ Furthermore, there was a permanent Anglo-Brazilian trade from 1808, the year in which the Portuguese crown opened the Brazil trade to British merchants. In 1808, Thomas, Phillips & Co. was preparing to export hats to Brazil, and had already sent a consignment to Lima.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the customs’ records first list exports of British hats to Buenos Ayres, Lima, and Vera Cruz in 1807, to the ‘Brazils’ in 1808, to Monte Video in 1812, and to Valparaiso in 1817. In 1798-1802, 20,895 beaver hats were on average directly exported to South America each year, although these hats exclusively went to Berbice and Demerara (both part of present day Guiana) and Surinam, all of which were occupied by the British at this time.

¹⁰⁸ Belich, *Settler Revolution*, pp. 32, 34; Rebecca Earle, ‘Luxury, Clothing and Race in Colonial Spanish America’, in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates and Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 219-27; and Lamikiz, *Spanish Merchants*, pp. 108-9.

¹⁰⁹ Lamikiz suggests that Lima merchants did not have non-whites in mind when they placed their orders for ‘fur hats’ but this seems at odds with the contemporary commentator that he earlier quotes who, writing in 1784, stressed that the ‘craftsmen, Indians and black peoples dress splendidly’ in Lima. See Lamikiz, *Spanish Merchants*, pp. 108-9, 111.

¹¹⁰ Guildhall Library, MS01570/5, *Worshipful Company of Feltmakers, Court Minute Book, 1782-90*, pp. 235-7.

¹¹¹ Frances Armytage, *The Free Port System in the British West Indies: A Study in Commercial Policy, 1766-1822* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1953), pp. 22-4, 42, 64, 70, 93, 112.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 114-6, 119; and Lamikiz, *Spanish Merchants*, pp. 19, 133.

¹¹³ Armytage, *Free Port System*, p. 114.

¹¹⁴ *Minutes of evidence, upon taking into consideration several petitions, presented to the House of Commons, respecting the orders in council* (P.P. 1808, Vol. X.81), p. 9.

With the advent of direct trade to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas, exports of beaver and castor hats to South America increased further, a trend that is clearly evident in Figure 5.4. The annual average number of beaver hats exported to South America rose to 40,362 in 1808-12, increased by two-thirds to 71,514 in 1814-7, and by a further two-thirds to reach 119,000 in 1818-21. It is clear from the export data for 1818-21 that the growth in beaver hat exports to South America was not only because of a decline in the use of the West Indies as a transshipment point but that the demand for beaver hats within South America was increasing. Indeed, when the annual average number of beaver hats exported to the West Indies and South America for 1818-21 (211,000) are combined, the quantity surpasses the peak number of such exports to the West Indies in 1798-1802 (170,000). As the demand for imported British beaver hats in the United States declined and the British West Indian economy waned, the demand for beaver hats in South America expanded. However, Table 5.2 shows that the southward swing to Spanish and Portuguese America did not make up for the fall in British beaver hat exports to the United States as the average 242,000 beaver hats that were annually exported to the Americas in 1818-21 was lower than the 311,000 exported in 1788-92, the 376,000 in 1793-7, and the 456,000 in 1798-1802.¹¹⁵

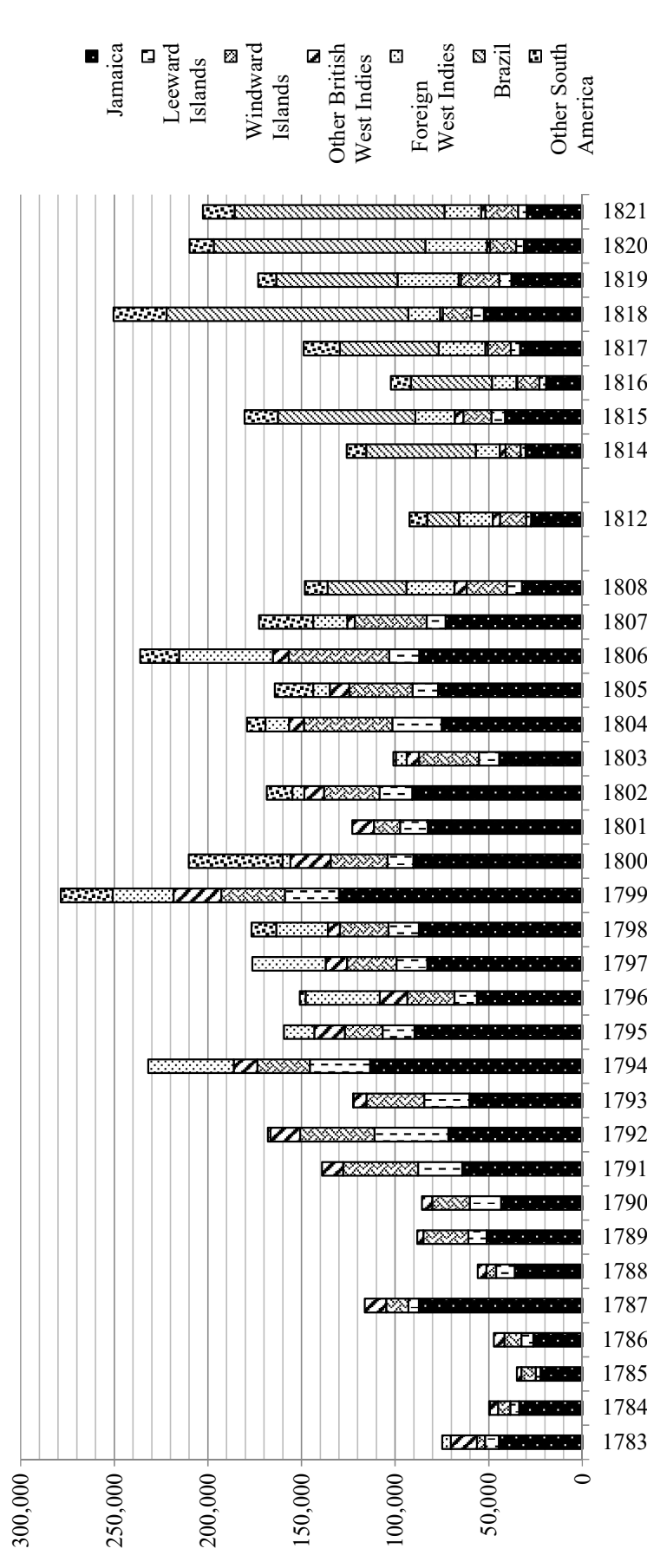
Figure 5.6 gives more depth on the specific regions to which beaver and castor hats were exported from Britain to the West Indies and South America. It shows that Jamaica accounted for one half of the beaver and castor hat exports to the foreign and British Caribbean, with an annual average of 55,378 such hats exported to the island over the period. Jamaica had four designated free ports and around 1815 its white population was only about 27,900, and so it is clear that a significant number of the hats exported to the island were sent on to other destinations, including, no doubt, to Spanish America.¹¹⁶ The British Leeward Islands — which included Antigua, Dominica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, and Tortola — took around 11 per cent, and the British Windward Islands accounted for a further 14 per cent.¹¹⁷ Figure 5.6 also shows that the surge in beaver hat exports to South America at the end of the period was largely comprised of increased exports to Brazil. In 1818, 129,000 beaver and castor hats were exported to Brazil alone,

¹¹⁵ See Table 5.2.

¹¹⁶ See Table 19.2 in J. R. Ward, 'The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. 2. The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 415-39. Jamaica's free ports consisted of Kingston, Savanna la Mar, Montego Bay, and Santa Lucea. See Armytage, *Free Port System*, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ Included in the British Windward Islands were Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia (after 1815), St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad.

Figure 5.6. Annual number of beaver and castor hats exported from Britain to South America and the West Indies by destination, 1783-1821.



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'Leeward Islands' includes Antigua, Dominica, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, and Tortola. The 'Windward Islands' consists of Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia (after 1815), St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad. 'Other British West Indies' is made up of Bahamas, Bermuda, East and West Florida, Honduras, Other British West Indies, and 'West Indies in General'. Included in the 'Foreign West Indies' is Caracas, Conquered Islands, Cuba, Curaçoa, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Porto Rico, St. Domingo, St. Bartholomew, St. Croix, St. Lucia (before 1815), St. Martins, and St. Thomas.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

although this number is somewhat short of the 175,000 beaver hats exported to Portugal in 1750.¹¹⁸

British exports of felt hats to the United States, West Indies, and South America were always higher than the number of beaver and castor hats exported. For all three of these regions, felt hat exports usually exceeded the volume of beaver and castor hats traded by around two-and-a-half times. There was, however, one notable exception. After 1807, the quantity of felt hats exported to the West Indies were more than five times greater than exports of beaver and castor hats. Whereas imports of British beaver and castor hats into the Caribbean substantially declined following the abolition of the slave trade, imports of felt hats were sustained. From 1793 through to 1821, the average number of felt hats exported to the West Indies each year ranged between 428,000 and 504,000, the latter of which relates to the years 1814-7 and was the peak period for British felt hat exports to the Caribbean. Why did cheap felt hat exports to the West Indies remain buoyant at the same time as more expensive beaver and castor hat exports dwindled? This shift towards cheaper felt hats may well signal the decline of British West Indies' 'planter class', a hypothesis that was first proposed by Lowell Ragatz in the early twentieth century.¹¹⁹

Europe was a far smaller export market for British beaver and castor hats than were the Americas. On average each year, only 44,535 of such hats were exported to Europe.¹²⁰ From 1783 to 1792, exports of beaver and castor hats to Europe were higher than exports of felt hats. In 1783-7 an average of 36,945 beaver and castor hats were exported to Europe each year as opposed to an average of 23,146 felt hats (Table 5.2). After 1793, the division of trade between the two types of hat switched as the trade in felt hats rapidly expanded from an annual average of 36,600 in 1793-7, to 93,807 in 1798-1802, and to 125,000 in 1803-7.¹²¹ This growth in trade occurred at the same time as the surge in British exports of cottons to the continent and it has been argued that the reason for this expansion was that it proved easier to get British manufacturers around French prohibitions and embargoes than to bring in raw cotton.¹²² It is probable that this explanation is equally applicable to felt hats. The European markets to which British beaver and castor hats were exported were diverse and ever-changing, a consequence of

¹¹⁸ See Figure 5.6; and Lawson, *Fur*, p. 116.

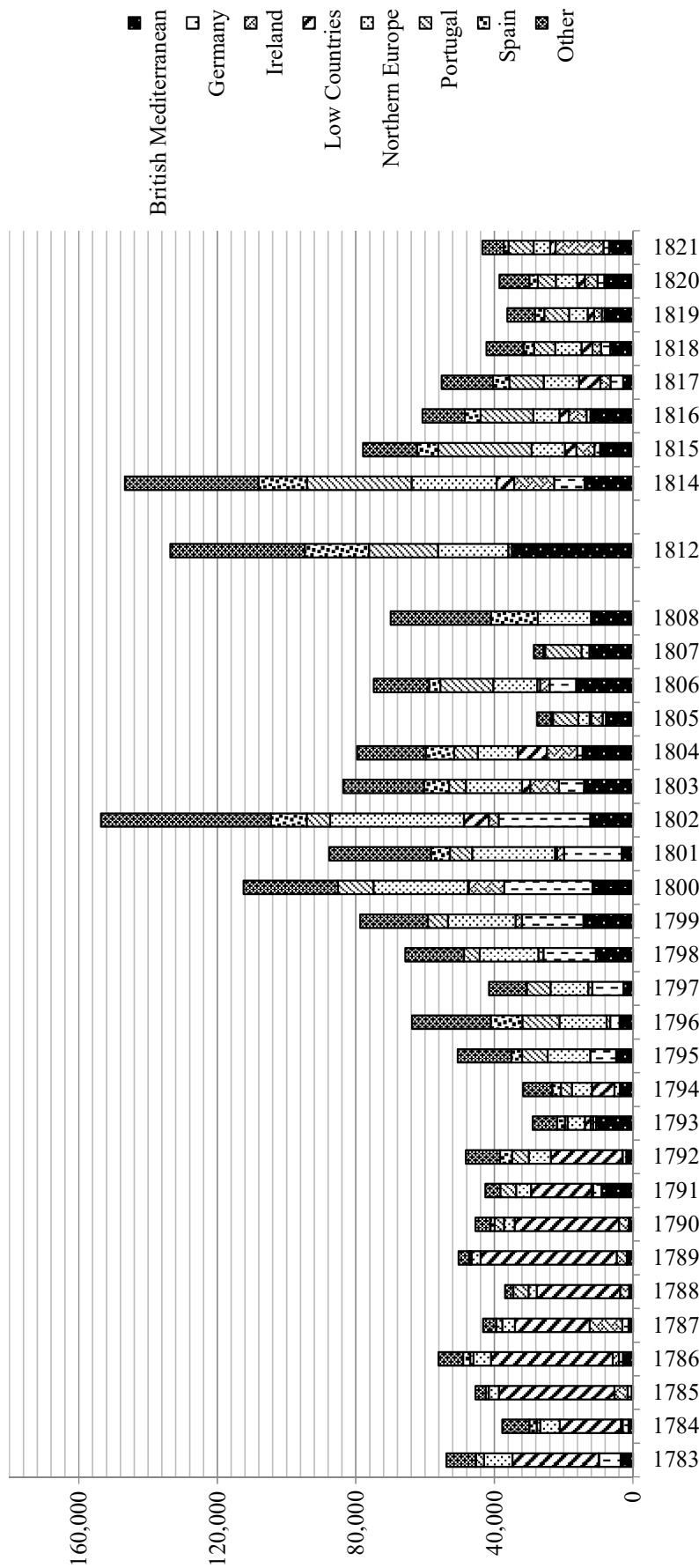
¹¹⁹ See Ragatz, *Planter Class*.

¹²⁰ See Table 5.1.

¹²¹ See Table 5.2.

¹²² Davis, *British Overseas Trade*, p. 16.

Figure 5.7. Annual number of beaver and castor hats exported from Britain to Europe by destination, 1783-1821.



Notes: There is no data for 1813 as the records were destroyed in a fire at the Customs' House in February 1814. The 'British Mediterranean' is made up of Gibraltar, Malta, Minorca, and Zante and Cephalonia. 'Northern Europe' includes Denmark and Norway, Heligoland, Poland Prussia, Russia, and Sweden. 'Other' consists of the British Isles, France, Italy, and Turkey.

Source: TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue, 1783-1808*; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries, 1812-21*.

the volatility created by the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. As is evident in Figure 5.7, between 1783 and 1792 the Low Countries made up the majority of British beaver and castor hat exports to Europe. Indeed, Thomas Davies & Co. had regular correspondence with a merchant firm in Amsterdam whom to which they sold hats during at least the 1780s.¹²³ As conflict engulfed the Low Countries in 1792-7 and beyond, beaver and castor hat exports shifted to Portugal (23 per cent), the British Mediterranean (21 per cent), Germany (17 per cent), and Spain (14 per cent). This trend continued into the nineteenth century but it was Portugal that was the most significant in the long run. In total, Portugal accounted for 18 per cent of the beaver and castor hat exports to Europe during the period, which was just short of the 19 per cent attributable to the Low Countries. An especially large number of beaver and castor hats were exported to Portugal in 1814-7 (20,597), and in 1808-12 Spain received 16,041. While these volumes were a fraction of the 285,000 beaver hats that were exported to Iberia in 1750, the fact that 1814-7 and 1808-12 were peak export years for their respective countries makes it clear that relatively few British hats were sent to Spanish and Portuguese America by way of Spain or Portugal in the early nineteenth century.¹²⁴ It seems, therefore, that the increase in direct British hat exports to South America resulted from a resurgence in demand for fine hats in Portuguese Brazil rather than from a mere shift in established trade flows that shipped hats via intermediary ports in Europe or the West Indies.

For most of the period, the British customs' records listed the exports carried on the ships of the EIC under the broad heading of 'Asia' or 'East Indies and China'. The ledgers continued to use this classification up to and beyond 1821, with new entries only added for the various places occupied by the British during the Napoleonic Wars such as Batavia, Ceylon, and Mauritius. While the records themselves do not distinguish between India and China, it is clear that the vast majority of beaver, castor, and felt hats exported in the EIC's ships were destined for British India.¹²⁵ Earl H. Pritchard's detailed exploration of the 'private trade' between England and China did not find beaver or felt hats to be a significant export article. Indeed, Pritchard's sole mention of hats was when he listed the goods exported from London on the *True Briton* by Captain Broadley in

¹²³ 'J. Davis to Thomas Evans' 14 June 1782, 'Thomas Davies & Co. to William Box and David Bain', 13 June 1783, and 'Thomas Davies & Co. to Coenraad Linckers' 5 April 1784, TNA, C 107/104, 'Foreign Letter Book', *Thomas Davies & Co., hatters of Stockport and London, 1771-92*.

¹²⁴ See Figure 5.7. In 1750, 175,000 beaver hats were exported to Portugal and 110,000 were exported to Spain. See Lawson, *Fur*, pp. 116-7.

¹²⁵ Pritchard, 'Private Trade' (1957), pp. 108-37; and Pritchard, 'Private Trade' (1958), pp. 221-56.

1773-4, a consignment that included one case of hats valued at £20 and from this valuation were evidently made from beaver.¹²⁶ Again, it is only in 1812 that the customs' records delineate between exports sent to the 'East Indies and China' on the Company's own account or private trade in the Company's ships. In 1812, 240 beaver and 6,150 felt hats were exported to India as part of the Company's own trade, while 17,730 beaver and 62,184 felt hats were exported by way of the 'privilege trade'.¹²⁷ It seems, therefore, that even before the Company lost its monopoly of the India trade in 1813, the export of beaver hats to India was primarily undertaken by private traders rather than the Company itself. In 1821, the Company exported 15,204 felt hats, while private trade in the Company's ships included 3,240 beaver, 984 castor, and 1,680 felt hats. By this year the India trade was open to non-EIC traders so that the customs' records also listed 4,570 beaver, 2,220 castor, and 1,620 felt hats as being exported to India by way of private trade in non-Company ships.¹²⁸

Around 16 per cent of Britain's beaver and castor hat exports went to 'Asia' between 1783 and 1821.¹²⁹ From an annual average of 64,458 beaver hats in 1783-7, exports rose to an average of 116,000 in 1798-1802.¹³⁰ Thereafter the trade sharply contracted. Exports halved to 56,288 in 1803-7 and the trade continued to decline, reaching an annual average of 11,268 beaver and castor hats by 1818-21.¹³¹ Prior to 1808-12, exports of felt hats were around three-fifths the size of beaver and castor hat exports to the East Indies and China.¹³² While the number of felt hats exported declined after 1808, the decrease was less marked than was the case for beaver and castor hats. By 1818-21 the proportions between the two sorts of hats had reversed so that the number of felt hats exported was around two-and-a-half times higher than the number of beaver and castor hats.¹³³ Overall, the number of beaver, castor, and felt hats exported to 'Asia' declined from a peak of 187,000 in 1798-1802 to 38,421 in 1818-21.¹³⁴ What was the reason for this decline and, in particular, the contraction in beaver and castor hat exports? Changes in demand amongst the 'British in the Orient' likely accounts for such a drastic

¹²⁶ Pritchard, 'Private Trade' (1958), p. 251.

¹²⁷ TNA, CUST 8/1, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1812.

¹²⁸ TNA, CUST 8/13, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1821.

¹²⁹ See Table 5.1.

¹³⁰ See Table 5.2.

¹³¹ See Table 5.2.

¹³² See Table 5.2.

¹³³ See Table 5.2.

¹³⁴ See Table 5.2.

reduction in trade. The black suit and the accompanying top hat were completely impracticable forms of attire in India's warm and humid climate, yet they continued to be worn by the British during the Raj. As E. M. Collingham argues, it was precisely because of their unsuitability that the suit and top hat were so important to the British community in India as they symbolised the idea that the British made no concessions to the colonial environment, thus excluding the Orient at the same time as enveloping the Anglo-Indian body in Britishness.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, it does seem that in the case of beaver and felt hats, the Anglo-Indian community did compromise to a degree. Perhaps the British limited their wearing of beaver and felt hats to formal occasions rather than everyday use. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that *topis* were widely worn by the 1830s and it is possible that they started to be worn much earlier in the century.¹³⁶ There certainly was a change in the hats worn by British soldiers in India. Whereas beaver and felt hats were widely worn in the eighteenth century, after 1800 they moved to wearing forage caps that were 'covered in white cloth with a piece of cotton attached to the back in the manner of the Indian *pugri* to protect the back of the neck from the sun'.¹³⁷

Beaver and castor hat exports to Africa, increased after 1793, rising from an annual average of 1,673 in 1783-7 to 6,636 in 1793-7 and then to a peak of 15,255 in 1798-1802 (Table 5.2). Exports decreased somewhat after 1802 but they were always at least four times as high as they had been in 1783-7 in the years before 1821.¹³⁸ The reason for the growth in the number of beaver and castor hats exported to Africa was not as much a result of changes in the slave trade but rather the expansion of the Cape Colony. The first entry in the customs' records that denotes the export of beaver hats to the Cape was in 1796 (the second year of the first British occupation of the territory) when 600 hats were exported. In 1798-1802, an annual average of 9,784 beaver hats was exported to the colony. Exports decreased in 1803-7 following the British withdrawal from the territory but once the colony was conquered again in 1806, exports increased and averaged 7,424 beaver and castor hats each year in 1808-12, 8,728 in 1813-7, and 9,315 in 1818-21. In all, the Cape Colony accounted for 63 per cent of the beaver and castor hats exported to Africa between 1783 and 1821. British exports of beaver and castor hats to other parts of

¹³⁵ E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c.1800-1947* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), p. 65.

¹³⁶ A *topi* was made out of wicker frame and was covered with quilted cotton with a *pugri* at the back. See *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

¹³⁸ See Table 5.2.

Africa, principally the West African Coast, were smaller in comparison. While there was a growth in the number of hats exported to the West Coast of Africa up to the turn of the nineteenth century, exports collapsed following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.¹³⁹ For instance, whereas an average of 5,471 beaver and castor hats were exported to the West African Coast in 1798-1802, they numbered an average of only 1,684 in 1808-12, 1,369 in 1813-7, and 2,330 in 1818-21.

The British export of felt hats to Africa was a much larger trade than that in beaver and castor hats. As is shown in Table 5.2, felt hat exports to the whole of Africa were always at least 40 per cent higher than exports of beaver and castor hats. In contrast to the latter trade, however, the number of felt hats exported to West Africa noticeably declined over the period as increased demand from the Cape Colony could not keep pace with the deterioration in the trade to West Africa following the abolition of the slave trade. In 1783-7, an average of 52,684 felt hats were exported to the West Coast of Africa each year and although the annual average dropped to 28,368 in 1793-7, the number was well over 60,000 in 1788-92 and 1798-1802.¹⁴⁰ By 1808-12, felt hat exports were more than 10 times smaller at an average of only 6,981 but they did slightly recover afterwards with 12,096 exported each year in 1818-21. While the number of felt hats exported to the Cape Colony increased after 1807, this growth was limited. From an annual average of 2,345 felt hats in 1793-7, exports rose to a peak of 19,534 felt hats in 1813-7.

Contemporary commentators writing in the early eighteenth century noted that nine-tenths of British beaver and felt hat exports were shipped to overseas markets from London and that the majority of these hats were manufactured in and around the City.¹⁴¹ 100 years later, the metropolis still handled the majority of British beaver and felt hat exports, although it was no longer quite so dominant. For most of the period of this study, the customs' records do not distinguish between exports from London or provincial ports. However, from 1812 onwards, the ledgers list exports from 'London' and the provincial 'outports' of England and Wales in two separate series. Between 1812 and 1817, an

¹³⁹ Excepting Morocco and the Barbary States (to which never more than 10 beaver hats were exported), it was not until after 1795 that the customs' records started to delineate between different regions of 'Africa'. The 'Cape of Good Hope' was first listed in 1796, followed by Sierra Leone between 1798 and 1808, Senegal from 1808 to 1812, and the Island of St. Helena from 1817 to 1821. Even with the introduction of these new categories, the customs' records continued to use a more fluid term to refer to the West Coast of Africa such as 'Africa in General' (1808-12), 'Other Parts of Africa' (1815-6), and 'Coast of Africa' (1817-21).

¹⁴⁰ Calculated from TNA, CUST 17/8-30, *States of navigation, commerce and revenue*, 1783-1808; and TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1812-21.

¹⁴¹ Corner, 'Tyranny of Fashion', p. 155.

Table 5.3. Annual average number of beaver, castor, and felt hats exported from London and the provincial outports, 1812-21.

	Beaver & Castor		Felt	
	London	Outports	London	Outports
1812-7	212,822 (81%)	49,385 (19%)	594,723 (64%)	330,788 (36%)
1818-21	203,674 (70%)	86,586 (30%)	541,869 (57%)	402,879 (43%)
Overall	132,137 (76%)	31,694 (24%)	571,233 (61%)	362,829 (39%)

Notes: As there is no data for 1813 because of the fire at the Customs' House in February 1814, the average for 1812-7 is a five-year average.

Source: TNA, CUST 8/1-14, *Ledgers of exports of British merchandise under countries*, 1812-21.

average of 213,000 (81 per cent) beaver and castor hats were exported from London each year as compared to 49,385 (19 per cent) from the outports (Table 5.3). In 1818-21 exports from the outports rose to an annual average of 86,586 (30 per cent).¹⁴² This increase was due to the growth in British trade to Brazil and the fact that provincial ports were very active in this expanding trade. Indeed, while only 13 per cent (6,492) of British beaver and castor hat exports were shipped from the outports to Brazil in 1814, 59 per cent (66,577) were by 1820. Table 5.3 also shows that the trade in felt hats was less centred on London than the trade in beaver and castor hats, a feature that reflects the expansion in production of felt hats in provincial regions by this time. Clearly many of the felt hats manufactured in the provinces were still sent to London for overseas export. The customs' records only list Scottish exports in 1783-9 and 1812-21 but analysis of this data shows that very few beaver, castor, or felt hats were exported from the country. No beaver and castor hats were exported from Scotland in 1783-9 and in 1812-21 they only accounted for 1 per cent of British exports. A greater number of felt hats were exported from Scotland but their share was small at only 7 per cent in 1783-9 and 6 per cent in 1812-21.

In essence, the British export trade in beaver hats between 1783 and 1821 was a tale of two periods. The final decades of the eighteenth century saw beaver hat exports reach their highest point within the century. This resurgence abruptly ended in the early nineteenth century as the demand for beaver and castor hats in the United States, India, and to a lesser extent the West Indies, declined. Despite the dawn of direct British trade

¹⁴² See Table 5.3.

to South America, exports to Brazil were not sufficient to counteract the troubles in these three key markets. In contrast, the growth that occurred in the British trade in felt hats during the 1790s was largely maintained in the two decades after 1800. London continued to dominate British overseas trade of beaver and felt hats, although competition from provincial ports in England intensified. The export trade in beaver and castor hats ran into difficulties in the early nineteenth century as traditional markets like the United States developed their own hatting industry and as consumers in British India and elsewhere shifted their preferences to forms of everyday headwear that better suited their colonial environment. Increasingly, cheap felt hats offered stiff competition to more expensive beaver and castor hats and high beaver prices made the latter less able to respond effectively to this challenge. The increase in the share of beaver hats exported from the outports in the 1810s perhaps indicates that provincial hat manufacturers were better placed to navigate such problems through driving down costs. The fall in British beaver and castor hat exports in the early nineteenth century and the sustained high price of beaver skins could certainly have propelled Rich's 'City forces' to push for the HBC and NWC to cease their rivalry.

III. Winter Wardrobes: Furriers and their craft

Beaver was, as the previous chapter demonstrated, the mainstay of the HBC's income. The Company traded in many other types of furs and while these were a smaller part of the Company's dealings it is important to establish the articles that they were made into and how these items were retailed to consumers. Such an analysis moves the present focus of the fur trade literature beyond its exclusive focus on hats and towards a more inclusive understanding of British consumer demand for fur-related apparel. The surviving stock-books of the metropolitan furriers Brunswick & Co. provides a rare insight into the trade of a furrier in the early nineteenth century, and this source underpins much of the analysis of the furrier's craft presented here.¹⁴³

Henry Poland's late-nineteenth-century guide to the furrier's trade is a good starting point from which to survey the uses for the many different sorts of furs imported into Britain.¹⁴⁴ Of course, a degree of caution is needed when applying the contents of

¹⁴³ LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, 'Stock Book', *Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street*, 1813.

¹⁴⁴ See Henry Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals in Nature and in Commerce* (London: Gurney & Jackson, 1892).

Table 5.4. Uses of the major furs imported into Britain.

	Bear	Beaver	Deer	Fox	Marten	Mink	Musquash	Otter	Raccoon	Seal	Wolf
<i>Luxury Apparel</i>											
Boas/Tippets	•			•	•		•		•	•	•
Bags							•				
Capes/Cloaks	•				•	•	•		•	•	
Coats/Jackets				•			•	•	•		
Coat Linings						•	•		•		
Cuffs & Collars	•	•						•			
Gloves	•	•					•		•		
Muffs	•	•		•	•		•		• ^b	•	
Sleigh-robcs	•										•
Trimmings	•	•		•						•	
Wrappers	•			•							•
<i>Other Uses</i>											
Felt		•					•			•	
Brushes	•			•	•						
Military	• ^a										
Imitate Sealskin		•				•	•	•			
Leather			•							•	
Rugs/Mats	•								•		

Notes:

^a including bear caps for the Grenadier regiments of the British Army, as well as for the Belgian and French Imperial Guards and Bavarian regiments;^b the heads were used to ornament foot-muffs.Source: Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. 68-71, 80-1, 88, 90, 98, 108, 119, 147-8, 150, 163-4, 168-9, 192, 194, 252, 261, 348-9; and *The Morning Post*, 5 January 1805 and 5 January 1814.

Poland's manual to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Table 5.4 divides Poland's observations of the uses of the major furs imported into Britain into 'luxury apparel' and 'other uses'. Items of luxury apparel included: boas or tippets (as they were more commonly known in the eighteenth century), bags, capes and cloaks, coats and jackets, coat linings, cuffs and collars, gloves, muffs, and trimmings. The making of tippets and muffs involved the largest number of fur types, with seven of the 11 major fur imports listed as being used in the making of them. For tippets the materials included bear, fox, marten, musquash, raccoon, seal, and wolf, and muffs were made out of a near-identical range with the exception of wolf but the inclusion of beaver.¹⁴⁵ Many types of

¹⁴⁵ See Table 5.4.

fur were also seemingly used to make capes and cloaks with Poland listing a total of six such furs. While Poland stated that musquash was used in the making of tippetts, bags, gloves, and many other luxury items this is unlikely to have been the case earlier in the century as it was supposedly Sir William Henry Poland who initiated the use of musquash in the dressing of garments and he was only 24 years old in 1821.¹⁴⁶ Other uses of course included beaver and musquash in the making of felt, although Poland also notes seal as being used for this purpose. Bear was used in the making of bear caps for the military such as the Grenadier regiments of the British Army and in addition to raccoon, bear was also used for rugs.¹⁴⁷ Bear, fox, and marten were apparently well-suited for use as paint brushes. Deer and seal were used to make leather. Poland does not specifically mention what sealskin was used for but contemporary newspapers reveal that walking shoes, pumps, shoe soles, boots, sandals, slippers, tobacco pouches, and pocket books could all be made out of sealskin.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, deerskin was used in the making of doe-skin and buck-skin breeches and shoes.¹⁴⁹ Finally, beaver, mink, musquash, and otter were apparently pulled and dyed to imitate sealskin.¹⁵⁰ Poland's treatise and contemporary newspapers can provide indications as to the articles that were made from the different sorts of furs but neither can be used to indicate the prevalence of their usage.

While such sources are especially rare, analysing the business records of a furrier provides a more precise indication of the domestic demand for luxury fur apparel than can be gleaned from retained imports, trade manuals, or newspapers. A stock book of Brunswick & Co., furriers of 2 Mansion House Street, reveals a number of intriguing insights into the activities of a 'manufacturing' furrier in the second decade of the nineteenth century. By 1820 the firm's capital was provided by three individuals; Joseph Dickenson Croskey and a 'Mr Pook' each provided 43 per cent (£5,850) and the remaining 14 per cent (£1,950) was provided by Charles Brunswick.¹⁵¹ The stock book pertains to the year 1813 and lists stock to the value of £8,540, with the value of stock

¹⁴⁶ See Table 5.4; and Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. 261-2.

¹⁴⁷ See Table 5.4.

¹⁴⁸ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 27 October 1804; *The Caledonian Mercury*, 30 October 1806 and 21 July 1808; *The Newcastle Courant*, 10 January 1807; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 13 October 1808; *The Leeds Mercury*, 24 November 1810; and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 73.

¹⁴⁹ *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 24 February 1784; and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 219.

¹⁵⁰ See Table 5.4.

¹⁵¹ See the 1820 balance sheet in LMA, CLC/439/MS11556, 'Annual balance sheets of Croskey, Pook, and Brunswick', *Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street, 1820-9*.

Table 5.5. Value of the stock-in-trade of Brunswick & Co. by fur type, 1813.

	Value (£)	Percentage (%)
Angola	25	
Badger	55	1
Bear	2,243	28
Cat	347	4
Chinchilla	679	9
Ermine	597	8
Fox	974	12
Hare	415	5
Leopard	85	1
Lynx	232	3
Marten	492	6
Mink	13	
Mouse	34	
Otter	76	1
Rabbit	142	2
Raccoon	17	
Sable	332	4
Seal	41	1
Skunk	62	1
Squirrel	73	1
Swan	908	12
Wolf	26	
Other ^a	14	
Total	7,882	

Notes:

^a includes lamb, monkey, musquash, and wolverine.

Source: LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, *Stock Books of Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street, 1813.*

detailed room by room.¹⁵² Table 5.5 shows the value of Brunswick & Co.'s stock-in-trade arranged by fur type. The majority of their stock was in the form of dressed and undressed bear, which accounted for 28 per cent of the total value of the identifiable furs and correlates well with the high proportion of retained bear imports found in the previous chapter.¹⁵³ The other notable furs listed in the stock books were fox (12 per cent),

¹⁵² The rooms in their premises included a showroom, first floor, third floor, a 'room next to workshop', and cellar. It is also stated that furs were kept at the premises of the person they were originally purchased from. See LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, 'Stock Book', *Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street, 1813.*

¹⁵³ £7,852 of the £8,540 listed in the stock book was identified as a specific type of fur. See Table 5.5.

chinchilla (9 per cent), ermine (8 per cent), marten (6 per cent), and hare (5 per cent), although it should also be noted that swansdown (made from swan feathers) made up 12 per cent of the overall value.¹⁵⁴ Overall, the stock book shows how a metropolitan furrier stocked a very broad range of furs. Crucially, however, the stock book does not contain any mention of beaver or musquash, either in dressed or undressed form. This lends support to the view that musquash was not used in the making of luxury fur garments and accessories until later in the nineteenth century. Contemporary newspapers do note sales of beaver cloaks, and ‘beaver and scarlet knap cardinals’ so it is somewhat surprising that the firm did not stock any beaver.¹⁵⁵ These newspaper advertisements are from the late eighteenth century however, so it is possible that the use of beaver became increasingly limited to the hatting industry as imports declined and prices rose from the 1790s onwards. Even so the evidence provided by Brunswick & Co.’s stock-in-trade casts doubt on J. F. Crean’s assertion that from the mid-eighteenth century onwards furriers and hat manufacturers began to compete with each other over beaver imports.¹⁵⁶

Table 5.6 shows that undressed furs amounted to half the value of Brunswick & Co.’s stock-in-trade. It is to be expected that the raw materials of a furrier’s trade would comprise a large proportion of their stock. In terms of manufactured garments and accessories, tippets were the most valuable. There were 631 tippets listed in the stock book and they valued £1,206 (14 per cent).¹⁵⁷ A tippet was a long fur scarf or shawl that was worn about the neck and shoulders and they had first come into fashion in the late fifteenth century.¹⁵⁸ While they were no longer as exquisitely bejewelled or were used to collect and shake out fleas, tippets in the eighteenth century were generally used outdoors — especially during the winter months — as a fashionable way to keep warm.¹⁵⁹ Bear appears to have been the main fur used for tippets. A total of 382 tippets were made out

¹⁵⁴ See Table 5.5.

¹⁵⁵ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 28 February and 21 August 1784; *The Whitehall Evening Post*, 5 June 1784. A ‘cardinal’ was a hooded cloak worn in winter that was usually made out of scarlet cloth or duffel. See Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 338-9. There was a type of woollen cloth made in Bath that was made into great coats and was commonly referred to as ‘bath beaver’. It is not clear why the cloth was referred to as ‘beaver’ however. See Rowland Mainwaring, *Annals of Bath, from the year 1800 to the passing of the New Municipal Act* (Bath: Printed by Mary Meyler & Son, 1838), p. xxvii; *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 15 March 1783; and *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 8 May 1783.

¹⁵⁶ Crean, ‘Hats’, p. 385.

¹⁵⁷ See Table 5.6.

¹⁵⁸ Francis Weiss, ‘Bejewelled Fur Tippets - and the Palatine Fashion’, *Costume*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1970), pp. 37-43.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-9; and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 398-9; and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 392.

Table 5.6. Stock-in-trade of Brunswick & Co. by item type, 1813.

	Value (£)	Quantity	Types of Fur
Caps	83 (1%)	54	sable, seal
Cuffs & Collars	2 (0%)	5	rabbit, sable
Edging	36 (0%)	1,416	badger, bear, cat, ermine, otter, rabbit, sable
Flounces	58 (1%)	85	bear
Helmets	10 (0%)	92	bear
Linings	94 (1%)	87 & 68 yards	ermine, mouse, squirrel
Muffs ^a	985 (12%)	288	angola, badger, bear, chinchilla, ermine, fox, hare, lynx, marten, mouse, sable, squirrel, swan
Pelerines ^b	621 (7%)	662	badger, bear, cat, chinchilla, ermine, fox, hare, leopard, lynx, marten, mink, mouse, rabbit, sable, seal, skunk, squirrel, swan
Rugs	21 (0%)	25	leopard
Spencers	394 (5%)	357	bear, cat, chinchilla, ermine, fox, hare, sable, seal, squirrel, swan
Tippetts	1,206 (14%)	631	angola, badger, bear, chinchilla, ermine, fox, hare, lynx, sable, swan
Trimnings	536 (6%)	2,268 & 280 yards	bear, cat, chinchilla, ermine, fox, leopard, marten, mink, rabbit, sable, seal, skunk, squirrel, swan
Undressed Furs	3,898 (46%)	14,636, 15 yards & 20 lbs.	angola, badger, bear, cat, chinchilla, ermine, fox, hare, lamb, leopard, lynx, marten, mink, monkey, musquash, otter, rabbit, raccoon, sable, seal, skunk, squirrel, swan, wolf, wolverine
Other ^c	553 (7%)	N/A	N/A
Total	8,497		

Notes:

^a includes muff borders;

^b in the stock book pelerines were listed as 'pilgrims', a term that derives from the French pèlerin meaning pilgrim;

^c consists of baskets, cases, hats, remnants, ribbon, tape, thread, wool, 230 'operas' to the value of £20, and several other miscellaneous items.

Source: LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, *Stock Books of Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street*, 1813. On pelerines being referred to as 'pilgrims' see Doreen Yarwood, *Illustrated Encyclopedia of World Costume* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1978), p. 318.

of bear, 92 from fox, and 78 from swansdown. Tippetts were usually accompanied with a matching muff: Brunswick & Co. stocked 288 muffs at a total value of £985 (12 per cent).¹⁶⁰ Like tippetts, muffs first appeared as a fashionable accessory in the Renaissance

¹⁶⁰ See Table 5.6.

Figure 5.8. Caricature of a woman wearing an excessively large muff and tippet, c.1800.

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copyright restrictions.

Source: Derbyshire Record Office, D5459/3/37, *Comfort for an Old Maid* by George Murgatroyd Woodward, c.1800-20.

during which they were worn by both men and women.¹⁶¹ By the eighteenth century it was rare for men to wear muffs but there are a number of such examples.¹⁶² As Laura Engel has convincingly argued, muffs were complex objects. In some contemporary portraits, muffs served as a symbol of glamour and of the aristocracy, but in others they represented crass accumulation and overt sexuality.¹⁶³ Indeed, the hidden function of the muff was to keep hands warm which easily conjured up sexual analogies.¹⁶⁴ Muffs were thus a prime target of contemporary satire, an example of which is shown in Figure 5.8. Caricatures of women holding excessively large muffs were particularly common in the late eighteenth century, and they played on contemporary anxieties over the female

¹⁶¹ Laura Engel, 'The Muff Affair: Fashioning Celebrity in the Portraits of Late-eighteenth-century British Actresses', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2009), p. 285.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 285-6; and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 262.

¹⁶³ See Engel, 'The Muff Affair', pp. 279-98.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Figure 5.9. Women's styles of fur apparel, c.1780-1820.

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Notes: Top left is a pelisse edged with fur and a large embroidered muff (1786). Bottom left is a pelisse of green satin with a vandyked double pelerine, chinchilla border, and chinchilla muff (1826). On the right is a portrait of the eighteenth-century actress Elizabeth Faren by Sir Thomas Lawrence. Faren wears a fur-lined cloak and holds a tippet with her right hand and a large muff with her left. Source: Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 338; Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 393; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession No. 50.135.5, 'Elizabeth Farren by Sir Thomas Lawrence', 1790.

body.¹⁶⁵ However, a number of eighteenth-century actresses such as Elizabeth Faren (pictured in Figure 5.9) and Sarah Siddons skilfully used the muff as a tool in which to promote an image of quality and grace.¹⁶⁶ Perhaps it is because the muff portrayed an

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 281, 292.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 280, 288-9.

image of urbanity over domesticity that there are so few portraits of gentlewomen wearing these items as they did wear them.¹⁶⁷ Bear was once again top when it came to muffs; 159 of them were made from bear, 47 from swansdown, and 26 from fox. Both muffs and tippets were highly expensive items; a tippet was about double the price of a fine beaver hat and muff was over triple.¹⁶⁸

In addition to muffs and tippets, Brunswick & Co. stocked a number of other ready-made garments. The furriers' held 621 pelerines to the value of £622 and 394 spencers worth £357.¹⁶⁹ In the early nineteenth century, a pelerine was a wide flat collar worn by women that spread to the shoulders and chest (see Figure 5.9), although for much of the eighteenth century this name was given to a short cape with long, pendant ends at the front.¹⁷⁰ A spencer (worn by men and women) was a short-waist jacket with a stand-fall collar, cuffed sleeves, and few buttons down the front that became fashionable in the 1790s.¹⁷¹ The majority of the pelerines were made out of hare (183), bear (78), and fox (50), while most of the spencers were made from hare (239), swansdown (57), and fox (23). A large quantity of trimmings that were used to line the edges of cloaks and other garments were also kept on hand.¹⁷² The pelisse, as pictured in Figure 5.9, was perhaps the most popular three-quarter length cloak at this time and they were often trimmed with fur.¹⁷³ Two different measurements were used to record the volume of trimmings which makes it difficult to determine which fur was the most prominent but suffice to say that swansdown, sable, bear, and fox were more commonly stocked.¹⁷⁴ The low number of caps, cuffs and collars, edging, helmets, linings, and flounces — the latter of which was a frill used to trim the sleeves of women's garments — suggests that it was more usual for these items to be made on demand.¹⁷⁵ Conversely, since the stock book captured a fixed point in time, if these items had a higher turnover of stock than the other ready-

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 289.

¹⁶⁸ Calculated by using the total number of tippets and muffs in Brunswick & Co.'s possession and the overall value of them. See Table 5.6.

¹⁶⁹ See Table 5.6.

¹⁷⁰ See definition of 'pelerine' in Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington, and P. E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Oxford: Berg, 2010).

¹⁷¹ Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 225-7, 343; and Cunnington, *English Costume in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 392.

¹⁷² See Table 5.6.

¹⁷³ Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 338-40.

¹⁷⁴ Of these four furs, there was a total of 672 pieces and 24 yards of swansdown trimming, 348 pieces and 47 yards of sable trimming, 336 pieces of bear trimming, and 264 pieces and 62 yards of fox trimming.

¹⁷⁵ See definition of 'flounce' in Cumming and Cunnington, *Fashion History*. It was common for flounces to be made from the same material as the garment to which they were attached. See Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 270.

made goods then the stock book would underestimate their usage. It is not possible to discern how representative Brunswick & Co. were amongst London's furriers but it is apparent that while they stocked a wide range of furs to meet the requests of their customers, the bulk of their trade was in the form of wearing apparel that was either made from bear, fox, swansdown, hare, or sable. Indeed, while 6 per cent of the value of Brunswick & Co.'s stock was in the form of marten, over nine-tenths of them were in an undressed form compared to only one-third in the case of bear.¹⁷⁶

Little is known about how furriers in this period made the articles of their trade. Brunswick & Co.'s records do not explain their methods of production and Poland's treatise concentrates on the specialities of particular countries in the dressing and dyeing of the different sorts of furs.¹⁷⁷ The London furriers' petition to the Board of Trade on the issue of revoking the ban on the dyeing of coney and hare skins sheds some much needed light on the furrier's craft. In the memorial the furriers maintained that 'many men' were employed in the dyeing of the furs and that 'hundreds of women' depended upon their working of the dyed skins into trimmings.¹⁷⁸ There was, therefore, at least two distinct phases in the making of fur-related apparel and these were divided along gendered lines: the dyeing of the furs and the fashioning of them into finished products. Like the use of mercuric nitrate in the hatting industry, the dyeing process was also a hazardous one. Poland notes that beaver and otter skins were 'silvered' by passing them over a solution of sulphuric acid.¹⁷⁹ In addition, the furriers' petition alludes to the state of the British fur trade. It claimed that since 1784 dyed fancy trimmings had ornamented thousands of scarlet cloaks for foreign markets and that since 1808 they had 'greatly contributed to uphold and revive' the nation's fur trade.¹⁸⁰

Included within Brunswick & Co.'s stock book is a series of 'retail accounts' that list the customers to which the firm supplied goods. Although they do not detail the goods sold, the accounts enumerate the debts owed to the furriers and the payments made against this debt. Of the 124 names mentioned in the accounts, 100 were women. Considering

¹⁷⁶ Out of a total value of £492, £41 of the marten was some sort of ready-made item while £451 were in an undressed form. The total value of bear was £2,243, £1,470 of which was in a ready-made form and £773 was in an undressed state. See LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, 'Stock Book', *Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street*, 1813.

¹⁷⁷ Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, pp. xlv-xlix.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, BT 1/89, 'Memorial of the Furriers of London', *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 18 May 1814.

¹⁷⁹ Poland, *Fur-Bearing Animals*, p. xlviii.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, BT 1/89, 'Memorial of the Furriers of London', *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 18 May 1814.

that most of the items made by Brunswick & Co. were used by women this is perhaps expected. More interesting is that the 24 men accounted for 40 per cent (£149) of the listed debts. The Earl of Aylesford owed the firm £26 5s., J. Blades Esq. £15 15s., G. Savie Esq. £13 1s., and J. Forer Esq. £10 10s..¹⁸¹ Since so many of the men's debts were attributable to 'gentlemen' it does seem that Brunswick & Co. primarily sold their produced wares direct to customers and that sales to retailers were uncommon. If other London-based furriers operated in a similar way then the retailing of tippets, muffs, and other fur-related apparel was largely confined to the metropolis and elite consumers continued to purchase these items during the London season. Alternatively, provincial furriers perhaps made their own tippets, muffs, and other fur-related apparel rather than purchasing these articles from their counterparts in the capital. It does seem unlikely that imported furs were fashioned into apparel in Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead at the turn of the nineteenth century however. A 1801 directory for the two towns lists only John Young as a furrier but even he was described as a 'hatter and furrier'.¹⁸² On the other hand, London boasted 13 furriers, seven skimmers and furriers, seven skimmers, two skimmers and another craft, and three furriers and another craft.¹⁸³ In their response to the Board of Trade, the hat manufacturers of London and Southwark maintained that the dyeing, staining, and working of furs into trimmings was solely confined to the metropolis.¹⁸⁴ Of course, at least some of the London furriers may have resold undressed furs. Indeed, there is another series in the stock book that lists 'debts to be paid' to creditors which includes at least three firms whom purchased furs from the HBC's auctions; Wontner & Son (who were owed £30), C. Schindler presumably of Nicolay & Schindler (£150), Peter Raymond Poland (£1,294), and another 'Poland' which probably refers to John George Poland (£490).¹⁸⁵ Brunswick & Co. also purchased furs from the HBC's auctions between 1798 and 1801.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, 'Stock Book', *Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street*, 1813.

¹⁸² It is unlikely that William Bell (skinner and leather-dresser), John Errington (glover and skinner), and John Leighton (rabbit dealer) were involved in the manufacture of fine fur garments and accessories. See *Directory of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead* (1801).

¹⁸³ *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

¹⁸⁴ BT 1/89, 'Answer of the Hat Manufacturers of London to the application of the Furriers', *Board of Trade; General In-letters and Files*, 24 June 1814.

¹⁸⁵ LMA, CLC/439/MS11553/1, 'Stock Book', *Brunswick & Co., Furriers, of 2 Mansion House Street*, 1813; and HBCA, A.48/7, *Fur Sale Book*, 1796-1810.

¹⁸⁶ HBCA, A.48/7, *Fur Sale Book*, 1796-1810, fos. 46, 61-2, 69, 87, 94-5, 110-1.

Figure 5.10. Trade cards of John Nicholas Schneider and Peter Raymond Poland, furriers.

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Notes: The top trade card relates to John Nicholas Schneider rather than John Henry Schneider as the former was listed in *Kent's Directory* (1794) as a furrier and skinner at 4 Holborn Bars. The bottom trade card is of Peter Raymond Poland rather than John George Poland as the former was listed as a furrier at 351 Strand in *Kent's Directory* (1794).

Source: The British Museum, Heal 65.20, *Trade card for Poland & Co., furriers*, c.1800; Heal 65.28, *Trade card for Schneider, furrier*, c.1794; and *Kent's Directory*, 62nd Edition (1794).

Figure 5.11. Trade card of Tobias Kleinert, furrier.

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copyright restrictions.

Source: The British Museum, Heal 65.13, *Trade card for Tobias Kleinert, furrier, c.1770.*

Beyond the use of a showroom at their premises on Mansion House Street, the surviving papers and accounts of Brunswick & Co. do not explain how they retailed their produced tippetts, muffs, and other fur garments to consumers. No newspaper advertisements issued by the firm have been found, although this is not particularly unusual as there is also no evidence that John George Poland, Peter Raymond Poland,

Wontner & Son, and Nicolay & Schindler placed adverts in the press.¹⁸⁷ It became increasingly common for tradespeople to advertise their business in metropolitan and provincial newspapers during the second half of the eighteenth century as the number and circulation of newspapers expanded.¹⁸⁸ Whether tradespeople touted for custom in the press was, however, rather dependent upon the clientele that they wished to cater for, and the tradesperson's own perception of how advertising in newspapers would affect their reputation.¹⁸⁹ Evidently, the aforementioned furriers were among those who disdained the newspaper advert or thought that such sales techniques would not attract greater custom. It seems that at least some of these furriers were more inclined to make use of trade cards, a visual form of advertising that was popular in the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁰ The trade cards of two metropolitan furriers, John Nicholas Schneider and Peter Raymond Poland, are shown in Figure 5.10.¹⁹¹ Both Schneider's and Poland's cards were elegantly illustrated and contained depictions of a bear, leopard, and lion to represent the furrier's trade. The wording in the cards emphasizes how 'fashionable' their produced garments and accessories were, and makes clear that they operated as retailers and wholesalers.¹⁹² Royal patronage was another way to attract custom and was a technique that was extensively used by Josiah Wedgwood.¹⁹³ Schneider's trade card prominently displays that he was the King's furrier, showing how he hoped to bolster his sales to the aristocracy by presenting himself as the nation's most skilled and respected furrier.¹⁹⁴ This was an accolade that Schneider inherited from Tobias Kleinert in 1794. It is particularly fortunate that one of Kleinert's trade cards has survived as it was one of the most lavish designs used by a furrier in the eighteenth century (Figure 5.11).

Not all London furriers rejected the use of newspaper advertisements. In November 1783, Hartshorn & Dyde's of Wigmore Street, Cavendish Square advertised their stock of muffs, tippetts, autumn cloaks, and satin pelisses trimmed with fur.¹⁹⁵ Dyde and Scribe

¹⁸⁷ A conclusion drawn from searches for these individuals in Gale's digitised collection of British newspapers.

¹⁸⁸ Hoh-cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui, Lorna H., *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 226, 237.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226, 234-5.

¹⁹⁰ See *Ibid.*, pp. 225-6; and Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, especially pp. 272-7.

¹⁹¹ The British Museum's collection of trade cards also includes a trade card and headed bill of the furrier John George Poland. See The British Museum, Heal 65.21, *Trade card for J. G. Poland, furrier*, 1799; and Heal 65.22, *Trade card for George Poland, furrier*, c.1823.

¹⁹² See Figure 5.10.

¹⁹³ Mui and Mui, *Shopkeepers*, p. 226.

¹⁹⁴ See Figure 5.10.

¹⁹⁵ *The Morning Herald*, 11 November 1783.

of 89 Pall Mall marketed their selection of muffs, tippets, and trimmings in December 1792 and proudly proclaimed that they were fur merchants to the Prince of Wales and Duke and Duchess of York.¹⁹⁶ It was common for London furriers to directly address specific demographics. Smith & Co. at 173 Fleet Street addressed ‘the ladies’ in January 1785 when advertising their range of winter cloaks, muffs, and fur trimmings, and Eden Deacon of 32 Bond Street targeted their advert towards the ‘nobility and ladies in general’ in October 1800.¹⁹⁷ Rather than the public, in December 1818 Messers Robins addressed their sale of fashionable and expensive muffs and tippets at their spacious rooms in the Piazza at Covent Garden to ‘private purchasers’.¹⁹⁸

Robins’ advert shows that by the second decade of the nineteenth century, metropolitan furriers were actively supplying provincial retailers with fur garments and accessories. There are, however, much earlier examples to be found in provincial newspapers. Indeed, James Underwood at his shop on 6 Castle Street, Bristol advertised his sale of ‘ladies beaver cardinals’ in August 1784.¹⁹⁹ In November 1798, Mackie & Mackenzie of Aberdeen informed the public that they had just received a valuable and elegant assortment of furriery, and in November 1806 the glovers James Miller & Son of Edinburgh issued a similar advertisement.²⁰⁰ Undoubtedly, it was the furriers of London that supplied these provincial retailers with their furriery. In November 1806 a Mrs Williams noted in *The Ipswich Journal* that she had returned from London with an assortment of pelisses, spencers, muffs, tippets, and winter prints, and in October 1807 Roy & Spalding of Aberdeen declared that they had been appointed agents for a top London furrier.²⁰¹ William Hall of Leeds and Conway’s warehouse at 24 Lord Street, Liverpool also clearly stated the London origins of their muffs, tippets, trimmings, and fur shoes in their adverts.²⁰² Hall’s advertisement is of particular interest as it shows that he distributed knowledge of the latest fashions to country dealers and that he offered his customers the option to part exchange their old muffs and tippets for new ones.²⁰³ Indeed, this analysis of the retailing of fur garments and accessories reaffirms the view that during

¹⁹⁶ *Star and Evening Advertiser*, 15 December 1792.

¹⁹⁷ *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, 30 October 1800.

¹⁹⁸ *The Morning Chronicle*, 8 December 1818.

¹⁹⁹ A cardinal was a women’s three-quarter length winter cloak with a hood. See Cunnington, *English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 338-9; and *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, 21 August 1784.

²⁰⁰ *The Aberdeen Journal*, 22 November 1798; and *The Caledonian Mercury*, 1 November 1806.

²⁰¹ *The Ipswich Journal*, 15 November 1806; and *The Aberdeen Journal*, 14 October 1807.

²⁰² *The Leeds Mercury*, 28 November 1807; and *The Liverpool Mercury*, 30 October 1818.

²⁰³ *The Leeds Mercury*, 28 November 1807.

the eighteenth century a growing and increasingly intricate network of shops emerged across Britain, and that these shopkeepers pioneered many new marketing techniques to increase their sales.²⁰⁴ If the newspaper advertisements are an accurate guide, then it does appear that after 1800 it became more common for provincial retailers to stock fur garments and accessories. Of course this may be due to the growing sophistication of the provincial press and the fact that more post-1800 newspapers have survived, but surely it is more than a coincidence that such a development occurred at the same time as the problems in the re-export trade lowered the price of several varieties of furs.

The production of fine fur garments and accessories remained the exclusive preserve of London furriers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Apparel made from imported furs was, on the whole, very expensive and this limited demand to the aristocracy and middling sorts. As a luxury trade that did not have significant growth potential there was little advantage for provincial ports to seek easier access to overseas fur imports unlike in the case of tea or raw cotton. While the provincial manufacture of beaver hats increased during this period, the furrier's craft remained a metropolitan monopoly. Provincial shopkeepers did, however, take an active role in retailing muffs, tippetts, pelerines, and fur-lined pelisses to consumers and their apparent greater involvement in this part of the trade after 1800 did perhaps increase the British consumption of these articles during a time of considerable distress in the re-export trade. It is unlikely that provincial shopkeepers did or could afford to limit their sales to metropolitan produced fur-garments and accessories; it was only the London furriers that could afford to specialise in the making and selling of fur-related apparel. Suffice to say that mercantilism did not just re-materialise with the HBC's acquisition of a monopoly of the British fur trade in 1821. London had, since the rise of the British Atlantic, monopolised the British fur trade, and the city continued to do so well into the nineteenth century.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Mui and Mui's study was the first to backdate many of the developments in the retail trade that were thought to have first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century to the eighteenth century. See Mui and Mui, *Shopkeeping*.

²⁰⁵ This reaffirms Nash's view that it was the non-commission colonial trades that gravitated towards the British outports in the eighteenth century, as these trades (fish, Irish provisions, rice, slaves, and tobacco) were all long-distance bulk trades. These trades involved high port and shipping charges and so British provincial ports were able to use their comparatively cheaper shipping and port facilities to wrestle these transatlantic bulk trades away from London. See Nash, 'British Atlantic Economy', p. 111.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the manufacture of fur clothing and accessories in Britain, the sale of these articles to British consumers, and the global trade in British beaver hats in order to establish if these parts of the fur trade promoted the persistence of monopoly. As the analysis has shown, there were indeed several factors which ensured that London continued to dominate the luxury trade in fur apparel and beaver hats and which encouraged control of the British fur trade to be placed in the hands of a single trading company. While silk hats did not strongly compete with beaver hats until after the period of this study, the increasingly popularity of felt hats — largely due to their low cost — certainly did impede the beaver hat trade in overseas markets. The decline in the volume of beaver imports, especially after 1800, kept beaver prices high and allowed felt hats to impinge upon their market share. There was, therefore, a clear motivation for metropolitan hat manufacturers and wholesale fur dealers to agitate for an end to the ruinous competition between the HBC and NWC. High beaver prices encouraged more production to shift from London to provincial regions in an attempt to lower costs, but as a consequence of the close links between metropolitan and provincial hat manufacturers, both of these two groups shared common interests. Greater provincial involvement also intensified the role of the outports in the export of beaver hats abroad. After 1800, country shopkeepers did become more prominent in the distribution of muffs, tippets, trimmings, and other fur garments to consumers. However, metropolitan furriers retained their monopoly over the making of these articles and controlled their distribution to provincial retailers.

In the aftermath of the violent events in the fur trade in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the future direction of the trade was a decision that was largely left in the hands of metropolitan forces. For provincial participants in the manufacturing of beaver hats or in the retailing of fur garments and accessories, there was little to be gained from a more open fur trade. As a luxury trade, the fur trade was inevitably dominated by the capital and the products of the trade were not items of mass consumption that could drive economic growth. It was thus left to London's gentlemanly capitalists to determine the future of the British fur trade.

*Consumers on the Frontiers of Empire:
The Hudson's Bay Company's overseas servants*

The eighteenth century saw profound changes in the dress, diet, and homes of consumers across the Atlantic World. In *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (1982), Neil McKendrick broke with the established orthodoxy that demand was dictated by factors of production and technological change — an approach that is rooted in neoclassical economic theory which prioritises supply over demand — and instead argued that the British industrial revolution was accompanied by a comparable ‘consumer revolution’.¹ While McKendrick argued that it was primarily in the second half of the eighteenth century that British consumers embraced a whole host of new material goods, subsequent research has found that many of these changes began in the late seventeenth century and that similar transformations occurred in Western Europe and North America. There were two major changes. First, consumers started to use semi-durable items of clothing and household possessions instead of more traditional durable objects.² These ‘semi-durables’ (glass, paper products, earthenware, linens, and lightweight cottons) were considerably cheaper and less cumbersome than their more durable alternatives (wood, brass, pewter, and heavy-duty woollens), and they could often be finished with attractive glazes, styles or patterns.³ Second, a number of imported groceries, namely tobacco, sugar, and tea, were

¹ Neil McKendrick, ‘The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England’, in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982), pp. 9-33; and Joel Mokyr, ‘Demand vs. Supply in the Industrial Revolution’, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (1977), pp. 981-1008.

² See Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Carole Shammas, ‘Changes in English and Anglo-American Consumption from 1550-1800’, in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 177-205; DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, pp. 66-7, 99, 114, 227; R. C. Nash, ‘Domestic Material Culture and Consumer Demand in the British-Atlantic World: Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1770’, *Manchester Papers in Economic and Social History*, No. 59 (2007), especially p. 7; and Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 1996), especially pp. 28, 31.

³ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, especially pp. 85-192; Berg, ‘In Pursuit of Luxury’, pp. 85-142; Berg, ‘From Imitation to Invention’, pp. 1-30; Nash, ‘Domestic Material Culture’, p. 7; Shammas, *Pre-Industrial Consumer*, pp. 76-7, 95-100, 292-3. Also see Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, especially pp. 28, 31.

added to consumers' diets, and there was a significant increase in the per capita consumption of these articles from the late seventeenth century onwards.⁴ Many of these new consumer goods, particularly for the elite and 'middling sorts', also became entwined with the concept of politeness, which saw the emergence of tea-drinking, manners (including a strict adherence to timekeeping), and dictated that parts of the home that were used for food preparation, work, or basic needs, should not be readily observable to visitors.⁵ While working in the isolated, sub-arctic climes of North America, fur trade employees sought and expected access to many of these new material goods.

This chapter seeks to uncover how the HBC's servants satisfied their demand for imported articles of dress, foodstuffs, and other goods while they laboured overseas, and to identify patterns in the types of commodities that the servants desired. Particular attention is paid to a series of account books that detail the commodities that the Company purchased on behalf of its overseas servants, which were then debited to the servants' accounts.⁶ Satisfying its servants' requests for imported consumer goods was an important way in which the Company attempted to maintain the loyalty of its servants. This was particularly important during a period when the Company needed to retain its existing employees so that it could acquire a workforce with the skills required to expand the Company's inland trade. An analysis of the goods purchased by the HBC's servants (mercantile sources) moves away from the use of probate inventories and court records, two sources that have underpinned several studies of eighteenth-century material culture.⁷ Indeed, as R. C. Nash has argued, one of the key problems with the use of probate inventories is that they provide a static depiction of consumption as they relate to the end of the life-cycle and so overemphasise consumer durables over more perishable items, especially groceries, textiles, and clothing.⁸ Mercantile sources, on the other hand, have been subject to less systematic analysis, despite the fact that such records show flows of

⁴ Shammas, *Pre-Industrial Consumer*, pp. 112, 292-3.

⁵ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 227-34; Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2002), pp. 869-98; and Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 145, 151, 155-6, 165. The 'middling sorts' generally refers to urban professionals, merchants, industrialists, tradesmen, and artisans, although some wealthy farmers and yeomen could also be included in this group. See Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 5, 15; and Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 13.

⁶ See HBCA, A.16/111-3, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*.

⁷ For three studies that have made extensive use of probate inventories see David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012); Shammas, *Pre-Industrial Consumer*; and Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*. John Styles has used English court records to establish the everyday dress worn by the 'lower orders' during the eighteenth century. See Styles, *Dress of the People*.

⁸ Nash, 'Domestic Material Culture', p. 26.

commodities and consumer spending during the life-cycle, and so provide a more accurate insight into what people spent their money on.⁹ Furthermore, while probate inventories under-represent wage-earners, particularly those on the lowest incomes, mercantile sources encompass all types of consumers.¹⁰ Mercantile records inevitably have limitations. They are often hampered by their fragmentary nature, as it is uncommon for merchant sale books and inventories to span more than one or two years, and they seldom contain details about the actual purchasers of the merchants' goods.¹¹ The HBC's records preclude a number of these problems, not least because they span a period of 27 years between 1787 and 1813. In addition, since there are a number of surviving employee records in the Company's archives, the wage, occupation, and origin of the individuals who placed the orders can be established.¹² They also include the transactions of low-earning labourers and high-earning post masters, and, since all of the Company's servants were men, a study of these records helps to address the disproportionate focus on women in eighteenth-century studies of material culture.¹³

The chapter is divided into five sections. First, the society of the Company's posts in Hudson's Bay is outlined, including the provisions and goods that the Company supplied to its servants as part of their employment. Second, the types of consumers that are contained in the Company's accounts are explored, as are the other ways in which the Company's servants accessed imported goods. Third, the commodities that the servants ordered from the Company are grouped into 'consumer' and 'producer' goods, and this information is combined with details about the servants' origins, wages, and occupations in order to determine how these factors influenced the commodities that the servants requested. Fourth, as the servants' most frequent purchase, the servants' spending on articles of dress (textiles, clothing, and personal adornments) is analysed. Fifth and finally, as the servants' second-highest purchase, the servants' orders of imported groceries are explored.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹ Mercantile sources are also not as effective as probate inventories are in constructing an overall representation of a household's durable contents as these possessions are usually accumulated over a far greater period of time than more perishable items. Ibid., p. 31.

¹² The employee records used in this chapter include: HBCA, A.30/3-16, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1819*; and HBCA, A.32/1-19, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1818*.

¹³ For instance, see Margot Finn, 'Women, Consumption and Coverture in England, c.1760-1860', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1996), pp. 703-22; and Helen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

I. *Life and Society in Hudson's Bay*

As discussed in chapter one, the HBC largely employed sojourning British servants to conduct its trade in North America. The Company provided its servants with accommodation as part of their contractual arrangement, and these spaces were organised according to a strict social hierarchy. The Company's officers were granted spacious living quarters and they ate, together with the Company's clerks, in the dining room of the master's or chief's residence, during which they were seated by rank.¹⁴ The rest of the men lived in barracks, with several men sharing a single room unless they resided with indigenous women, in which case they were granted a small room of their own.¹⁵ Relationships between the Company's servants and indigenous women were uncommon before 1770.¹⁶ The Company did not allow British women to emigrate to Hudson's Bay and so, as servants spent several years, or even decades in North America, loneliness was probably one of the main reasons why these bonds were established.¹⁷ 'Wife-lending' was a customary practice of many of the Aboriginal communities in Hudson's Bay and was used to forge trade agreements.¹⁸ The need to cement trading ties through 'marriage' was, however, becoming increasingly obsolete by 1800, especially in well-established areas of the trade.¹⁹ Between 1783 and 1821, intimacy between Company servants and indigenous women became more conventional, although they were now more likely to involve 'native daughters' of the Company's servants rather than Aboriginal women.²⁰ At first, the London Committee forbade its servants from forming these relationships but, following the protestations of its servants, eventually realised that it could not effectively prevent them from establishing such ties.²¹ As discussed in chapter one, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the Company had begun to employ the 'native sons' of the Company's servants as this helped the Company to keep its existing workforce happy and, in time, to acquire a workforce well equipped with the skills required to survive in the challenging local environment. Therefore, like Eurasians in British India, in the late eighteenth and

¹⁴ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 148.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁶ Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, p. 52. For a detailed discussion of the relationships established between the HBC's servants and indigenous women see *Ibid.*, pp. 64-80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁹ Virk, *Many Tender Ties*, pp. 92-3.

²⁰ On 'native daughters' see *Ibid.*, pp. 95-122.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 76-7.

early nineteenth centuries the servants' indigenous children were well integrated into the British society of Hudson's Bay.²²

As will be shown below, the emergence of these family units did, of course, affect the commodities ordered by the Company's servants. For instance, in May 1801, John Hodgson, second in command at Albany House, noted in a letter to the inland trader Robert Goodwin that he had delivered half a dozen gingerbread cakes to Goodwin's daughter at various times, and it is clear that Goodwin had ordered these cakes from Britain.²³ Together with a Cree woman named Mistigoose (also known as Jenny), Goodwin is known to have fathered four children while he worked in Hudson's Bay, and they included three daughters (Caroline, Nancy, and Peggy) and one son (William Adolphus Barmby Goodwin).²⁴ In 1796, Goodwin sent his son to England so that he could be educated but his daughters remained in North America.²⁵ While in England, John Barmby and his wife in the village of Yoxford, Surrey, looked after Goodwin's son as he attended school, and Goodwin supported his son's upkeep and education by leasing out the pastoral land that he owned near the village.²⁶ Mistigoose died sometime in 1798, and Caroline, Nancy, and Peggy subsequently lived with their grandmother Puckethwanisk.²⁷ In effect, therefore, Goodwin had three households to support, his son in England, his daughters in Hudson's Bay, and himself. While it was common for a servant's indigenous wife and children to accompany them in Hudson's Bay, it was just as common for them to reside outside of the Company's posts.²⁸ The servants' wives and daughters generally performed household duties, and also made and mended clothes.²⁹ For instance, in May

²² Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, especially pp. 76-7.

²³ 'John Hodgson to Robert Goodwin' 12 May 1801, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/002, *Business and Private Correspondence of Robert Goodwin, 1797-1801*, p. 84; and HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1800, fos. 6-7.

²⁴ HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Goodwin'.

²⁵ HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Goodwin'. The Company charged Goodwin £10 10s. for his son's passage to England. See LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/001, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin, 1776-97*, p. 88.

²⁶ 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 13 November 1796, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/001, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin, 1776-97*, p. 86; and 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 25 May 1799, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/002, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin, 1797-1801*, p. 45; and 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 15 May 1802, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/003, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin, 1801-4*, p. 35.

²⁷ 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 25 May 1799, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/002, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin, 1797-1801*, p. 45. In Goodwin's will it is stated that his daughters cohabited with Puckethwanisk and that she was the mother of Mistigoose. See TNA, PROB 11/1441/141/2, 'Will of Robert Goodwin, Gentleman of Yoxford, Suffolk', *Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury*, 14 April 1806.

²⁸ Bayley, *Londoner in Rupert's Land*, p. 14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 18.

1783, Edward Jarvis in London sent Goodwin a few coat and waistcoat buttons for Goodwin's use 'and a few needles for Mistigoose'.³⁰

The fact that many of the Company's servants were single upon entering the Company is probably another reason why they formed relationships with indigenous women in Hudson's Bay. Indeed, the average age of marriage in England at the turn of the nineteenth century was around 26 years, while the age at which men entered the Company's service was about 20 years.³¹ Goodwin was aged 20 when he joined the Company in May 1781, and it is clear that he was unmarried at the time, although it does appear that he had an intimate relationship with a Mary Hunter who resided in Suffolk.³² This connection did not last however, as in May 1799, John Barmby mentioned that he had seen Goodwin's 'old flame' in a letter to Hudson's Bay.³³ Yet it seems the case that the majority of the Company's servants did not form lasting relationships with indigenous women in Hudson's Bay, and actually used their employment in the Company as a means through which to save money, which was one of the benefits that the Company used to recruit servants.³⁴

In addition to accommodation, the Company supplied its servants with basic provisions, which included grain, flour, beef, poultry, butter, cheese, hams, vegetables, port, and scotch.³⁵ Analysing the Company's purchases of provisions from suppliers in London provides a useful way in which to compare how the diet of the Company's servants compares to estimated working-class purchases of foodstuffs in the late eighteenth century. At this time, almost two-thirds of working-class purchases on foodstuffs was made up of grains, while purchases of meat, dairy, and groceries respectively made up 14, 13, and 10 per cent (Figure 6.1).³⁶ In contrast, at only 37 per cent, grains made up a much smaller proportion of the HBC's provisioning costs (Figure 6.2). The Company's meat purchases were far greater than was the norm for

³⁰ 'Edward Jarvis to Robert Goodwin' 17 May 1783, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/001, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin*, 1776-97, p. 14.

³¹ Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single Homemaker*, p. 12; and Nicks, 'Orkneymen in the HBC', p. 112.

³² HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Goodwin'; 'Mary Hunter to Robert Goodwin' c.1776 and 30 December 1776, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/001, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin*, 1776-97, pp. 3, 7.

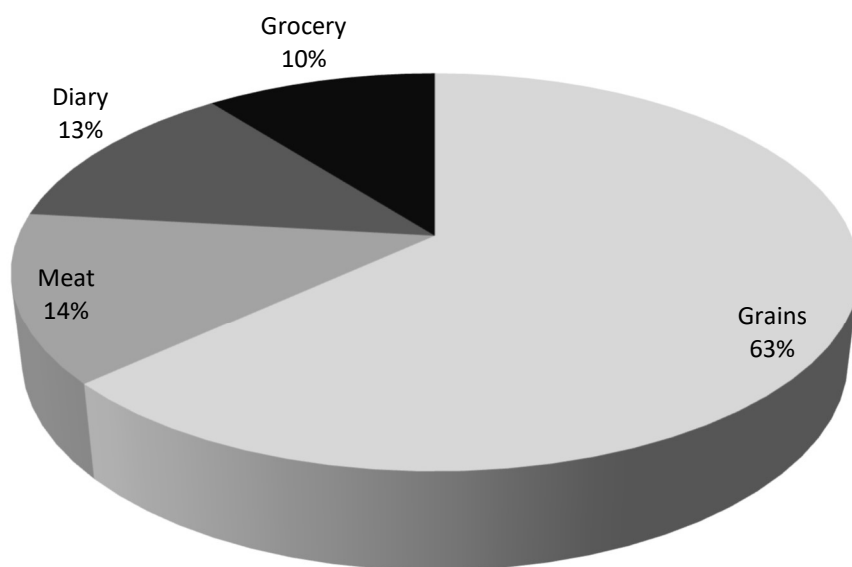
³³ 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 12 May 1799, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/002, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin*, 1797-1801, p. 46; and HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Goodwin'.

³⁴ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 41, 43, 157.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 138.

³⁶ Calculated from data contained in Hans-Joachim Voth, 'Living Standards and the Urban Environment', in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. 1: Industrialisation, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 282.

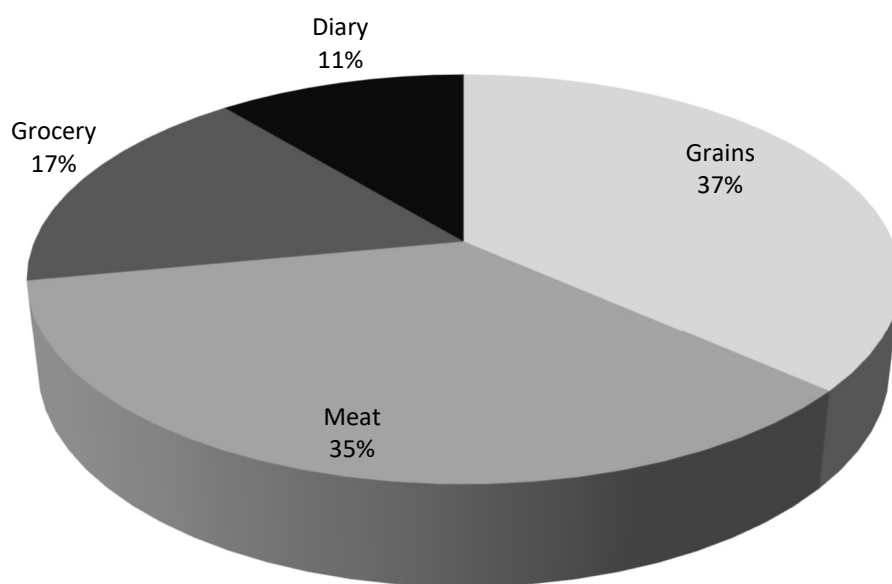
Figure 6.1. Composition of estimated working-class purchases of foodstuffs, 1788/92.



Notes: For the purpose of comparison potatoes were discounted and bread, wheat flour, and oatmeal were listed as grains.

Source: Voth, 'Living Standards', p. 282.

Figure 6.2. Composition of the HBC's purchases of provisions from London suppliers, 1783-1821.



Notes: For the purpose of comparison Irish provisions and meat were included in the 'meat' category and the alcohol, drugs, and other categories listed in the Company's accounts with its suppliers were discounted.

Source: HBCA, A.25/3-5, *Merchandise Exported*, 1778-1823.

working-class diets however. At 35 per cent, the Company seemingly provided its servants with a much more intensive diet of meat than most would have been accustomed to before joining the Company's employment.³⁷ The types of meat that the Company exported to Hudson's Bay for its servants mainly consisted of beef, pork, and bacon, although veal and mutton were also occasionally sent out.³⁸ While it is the case that the Company's purchases include those for officers as well as for low-ranking labourers and canoe-men, the discrepancy is too large to not suggest that the Company provided all its employees with substantial quantities of meat. Furthermore, while it was the case that some grains or vegetables were grown in Hudson's Bay or supplied from the Red River Settlement, the Company also acquired notable amounts of geese, wild fowl, deer, moose, and pemmican from many different bands of Cree, Chipewyan, and Assiniboine peoples, which were exchanged for trading commodities.³⁹ Indeed, as the lands that lay to the east of Lake Winnipeg became increasingly devoid of fur-bearing animals, many Aboriginal communities switched from specialising in the trapping or trading of furs, to the sourcing of provisions for the fur-trading companies.⁴⁰ The cultivation of grains and vegetables at the Company's posts was far overshadowed by the protein-rich provisions supplied by Cree, Chipewyan, and Assiniboine peoples. From the Company's focus on high-quality provisions, as discussed in chapter three, it is apparent that one of the reasons why the Company provided its servants with a higher than average diet of meat was an attempt to keep its workforce happy.

II. *Accessing Imported Goods*

Beyond basic accommodation and provisions, the Company's servants had to rely on other methods by which to access any other items that they wanted while in Hudson's Bay. This was especially the case for clothing as the Company did not include clothes in the list of items that it provided its servants with.⁴¹ The servants had a number of ways in which to acquire additional goods. First, the servants could procure such items before they embarked on an outbound ship to the Bay. Second, they could purchase them from the Company's posts if such supplies were readily available. Indeed, this method no doubt became increasingly common in the early nineteenth century as the number of servants

³⁷ See Figure 6.2.

³⁸ See HBCA, A.1/49, *London Minute Book*, 1805-10, fos. 57-8.

³⁹ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, especially pp. 123-35; and Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 67-8.

⁴⁰ See Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, especially pp. 123-35.

⁴¹ Burley, *Servants*, pp. 26-7; and Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 140.

with families in Hudson's Bay increased. In his will, Goodwin left £500 in 3 per cent consuls in trust to the HBC for the use of his three daughters who were to be paid in goods out of the Company's warehouse at Albany House.⁴² Third, the Company's servants could ask their friends and family in Britain to deliver goods to the Company's London warehouse in time for the annual shipment to Hudson's Bay. Alternatively, sometimes the servants' associates in Britain sent gifts on the annual shipments.⁴³ For instance, Goodwin received hams, pots of preserves, pickles, and butter from his friends in Surrey and in May 1793, Charlotte Barmby, together with her sister and mother, sent Goodwin handmade shirts and handkerchiefs.⁴⁴ Fourth and finally, the servants could ask others to purchase goods on their behalf. One way was, of course, to ask the Company to fulfil their orders for imported commodities but Goodwin's surviving correspondence makes clear that John Louttit in Stromness also offered such services to the Company's servants. In June 1796, Louttit fulfilled an order for Goodwin to the value of £6 10s. 6d. which included: three flowered quart mugs, three flowered one-pint quart mugs, three men's hats, one 1½ gallon tea kettle with a folding handle, one hat for a boy of eight years, six plated table spoons, six plated tea spoons, six fine ginger cakes, six fine spiced ginger cakes, one pair of shoes for a boy of eight years, three chest locks with screws for a boy of eight years, three pairs of hinges, three pairs of strong brass lifting handles, and a box to hold the items.⁴⁵ As is shown below, the range of items included in Goodwin's order was very similar to those fulfilled by the Company.

One reason why the EIC lost its monopoly of the India trade in 1813 was because the East India Agency Houses — which emerged on the back of the EIC's servants need for banking and related financial services — opposed the renewal of the Company's Charter.⁴⁶ The HBC's servants, particularly the Scots and Orkneymen employed by the Company, needed their earnings to be transferred to their families in Scotland. Initially, the Company's servants endorsed bills that were payable to the Company's ship captains

⁴² TNA, PROB 11/1441/141/2, 'Will of Robert Goodwin, Gentleman of Yoxford, Suffolk', *Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury*, 14 April 1806.

⁴³ Bayley, *Londoner in Rupert's Land*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ 'Charlotte Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 11 May 1793, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/001, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin*, 1776-97, p. 53; 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 12 May 1797, 'Charlotte Barmby to Robert Goodwin' 13 May 1798 and 'John Barmby to Robert Goodwin' May 1798, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/002, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin*, 1797-1801, pp. 10, 25, 27.

⁴⁵ 'John Louttit to Robert Goodwin' 17 June 1796, LMA, CLC/453/MS06481/001, *Business and private correspondence of Robert Goodwin*, 1776-97, pp. 80-1.

⁴⁶ Webster, *Twilight of the East India Company*, especially pp. 24-6, 32-3, 36-8, 51-2; and Anthony Webster, *The Richest East India Merchant: The Life and Business of John Palmer of Calcutta, 1767-1836* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), particularly pp. 10-4.

who collected the servants' wages when they returned to London, and thence, on the next outbound voyage, paid the money to the person who the servant had chosen to receive them.⁴⁷ These reimbursements were thus subject to a long delay, yet it was also a highly insecure payment method. The death of a ship captain in the early 1780s led to the loss of all the servants' property that had been in the captain's possession.⁴⁸ The Company introduced a new mode of payment in the mid-1780s that ended the servants need to handle cash directly, and thus removed the ship captains from the remittance process.⁴⁹ Transactions in Rupert's Land were thenceforth conducted on a credit and debit system that enabled the Company's employees to purchase goods from the Company's posts and have payments made to individuals and financial institutions in Britain.⁵⁰ In essence, the Company took control of the remittance system and essentially provided its servants with financial services. Therefore, in addition to the small scale of these transactions in comparison to those required by the EIC's servants, 'private trade' in the case of the HBC did not allow for an organised 'Agency House' to rise up and eventually challenge the Company's Charter. While John Louttit occasionally fulfilled orders for Company servants, the servants paid for these purchases by drawing on their account with the Company.

The HBC's servants thus had several ways in which to access imported commodities while they worked in North America; Robert Goodwin had goods purchased by and gifts sent from friends and family in Britain, and he placed orders with tradesmen like John Louttit. Goodwin also asked the Company to fulfil many of his requests for imported commodities. For most of the period between 1783 and 1821, the Company paid the shipping and customs' charges that arose from all the packages sent to the Company's servants, whether they were gifts from associates or Company purchases. On 25 May 1820, however, the Company issued the following notice to its officers in Hudson's Bay:

We observe that there is a considerable increase in the number and size of the packages sent to the Bay for our servants and which seldom come to the house till the ships are on the point of sailing, they take up a great proportion of room in the ships and occasion not only considerable inconvenience but a heavy expense in custom house and shipping charges. We do not wish that our servants should be prevented from receiving supplies[sic.] from their friends in Europe, but it is necessary that we should in the Month of January be in possession of the tonnage required by each individual, that a calculation may be made of the additional room wanted.

⁴⁷ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, p. 141.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

We therefore desire that you make it publically known that the indulgence of sending goods free can no longer be allowed, and that it will be necessary for the agent of the particular in England to make application in the month of January (accompanied by a list of the articles for which freight is requested) for a shipping permission, and if granted they must pay at the rate of 5/ per foot cube measurement or £10 per ton weight at the option of the Company, to cover the expenses of freight, export duty and shipping charges... before they will be allowed to be received on board.⁵¹

The Company's plan to impose freight charges on the servants' packages was contested. In response to the complaints from its servants, the Company halved the charge to £5 per ton or 2s. 6d. per cubic foot.⁵² The timing of this change in policy is important. While the Company did not meet with Ellice and Simon McGillivray until December 1820, it seems more than a coincidence that the Company moved to introduce charges on the servants' packages at a time when the Company had sent George Simpson to meet with the dissident wintering partners of the NWC at Fort William.⁵³ The London Committee evidently felt that they were in a position to end the practice of offering its servants free shipping on their packages, yet the fact that the Company had provided this indulgence shows that this policy was designed to maintain the loyalty of the Company's servants.

III. Uncovering the Cargoes

Before considering the specific commodities that the servants requested the Company to purchase on their behalf, it is necessary to outline the methodology that was used to analyse the 'servants' commissions'.⁵⁴ The account books detail the orders that the Company fulfilled for its servants over a continuous 27-year period between 1787 and 1813. There are a number of purchases in the ledgers after 1813, but these are less detailed than those of the preceding years and so have been discounted. The servants' orders were matched with the information contained in the Company's employment records so as to allow the purchases to be analysed according to the servant's origin, wage, and occupation.⁵⁵ A set of problems does arise from the cross-referencing of these financial and biographical sources. While the purchases are continuous for the period 1787-1813, there is a gap in the official lists of servants between 1801 and 1811. The surviving servants' contracts help to fill in some of the missing blanks, but some details needed to

⁵¹ HBCA, A.6/19, *London Correspondence Book Outwards — Official*, 1816-26, fo. 99.

⁵² HBCA, A.1/52, *London Minute Book*, 1818-21, fo. 112.

⁵³ Campbell, *Lord of the Northwest*, p. 282.

⁵⁴ See HBCA, A.16/111-3, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897.

⁵⁵ HBCA, A.30/3-16, *Names & c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-1819; and HBCA, A.32/1-19, *Servants' Contracts*, 1783-1818.

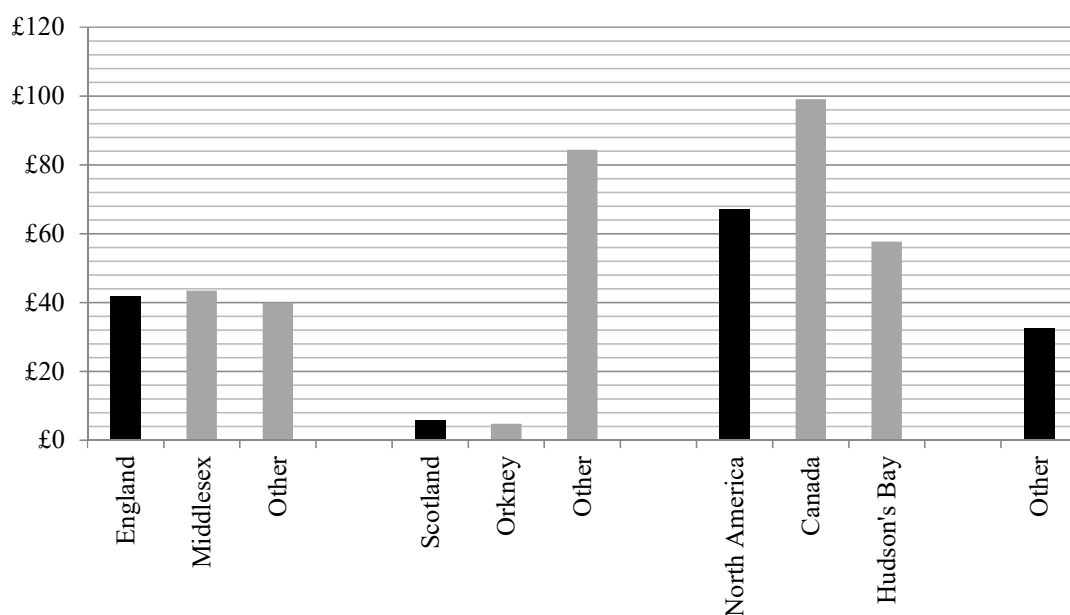
be inferred and deduced to make the fullest sense of the data. For instance, if a servant was listed in 1800 and was still recorded in 1812, some of the intervening details were deduced by following the conventional patterns of career advancement. Indeed, it was unusual for a servant to contract at a lower annual wage than what they had previously earned, as experience was valued and rewarded. Biographical sheets from the HBC archives were also used to determine the occupations of some servants during these intervening years, although these biographies are by no means comprehensive.⁵⁶ In some cases, no logical assumptions were attainable and so the servant's order was discounted. This was especially the case with a small number of the Orkneymen employed by the Company, as many had the same name and hence an order could not always be matched to a particular servant. The Company's account books often listed the post at which the servant was stationed at, and so it was usually possible to deduce who the order related to by comparing this with the location of the servant as recorded in the lists of servants or the servant's contract. For some Orkneymen, however, even the post data is not sufficient to identify the specific servant as there were sometimes Orkneymen with an identical name at the same post. In most cases, however, it was possible to match the orders to the corresponding origin, wage, and occupation of the purchaser.

Figure 6.3 shows the servants' per capita purchases according to their recorded 'place of origin'.⁵⁷ 'Per capita' in this sense is in relation to the number of servants in the Company's employ in 1800, in respect of their place of origin. The servants who originated from North America were the ones who routinely placed the highest value orders with the Company. These were either French-Canadians or British emigrants from the Canada or the 'native sons' of the Company's servants. The reason for this was because such servants received their wages through commodity purchases. These orders were often large and regularly surpassed the servant's entire annual wage. As Figure 6.3 shows, the servants who were least likely to place orders with the Company were Orkneymen. This is partly because Orkney was the predominant source of the Company's low-paid labourers, but it is also probably because Orkneymen sought to save a greater proportion of their wages. While there were only six 'other Scots' employed by the Company in 1800, their per capita purchases were far higher than was the case for Orkneymen. This is because they performed better paid occupations such as surgeons and

⁵⁶ See HBC Biographical Sheets < <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical> > [Accessed: 15/09/2016].

⁵⁷ The servants stated their place of origin when signing a contract with the Company, but this did not necessarily accurately reflect their birthplace.

Figure 6.3. HBC's servants' per capita purchases by place of origin, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: Only the entries that could be matched to a servant and for whom a corresponding place of origin was identifiable were included. The per capita purchases were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of goods for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1813*; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1815*.

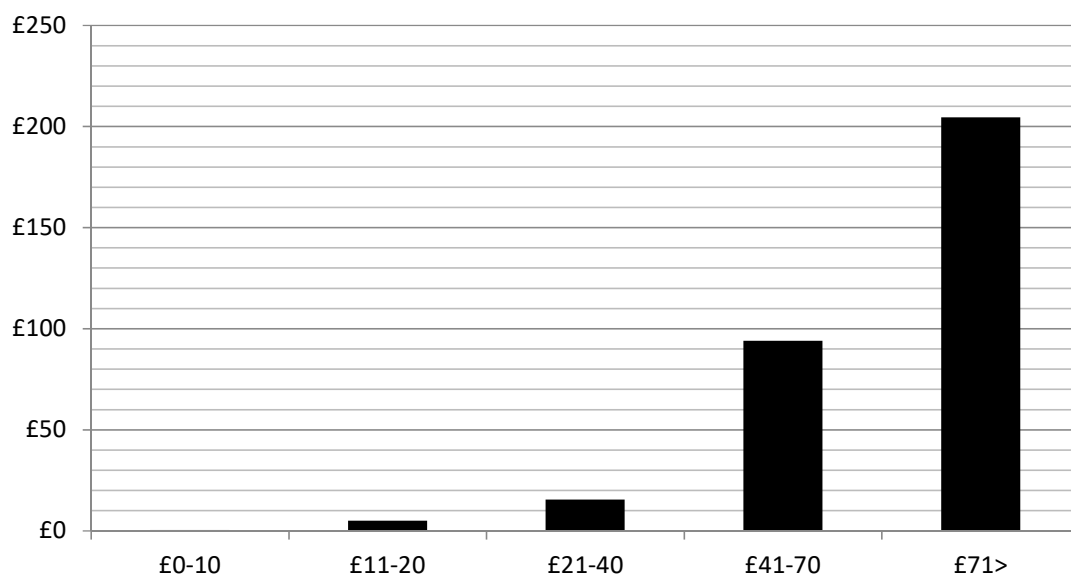
masters.⁵⁸ The English servants' per capita purchases were also higher than was the case for Orkneymen as they were often officers and thus were better paid. In consideration of the striking disparity between the spending patterns of British and North American servants, future analysis of the purchases by wage focuses on the Company's British servants.

While the servants' origins were important in determining the value of the purchased goods, wages were, of course, a significant factor. As is evident in Figure 6.4, the lowest paid British servants, those earning below £10 per annum, requested very few goods from the Company. Indeed, their per capita purchases only amounted to £0.47 over the whole 27-year period. The limited purchases of these servants are, therefore, likely to reveal the commodities that they most treasured. The next wage level (£11-20) spent over 10 times more with a spend of £5.05.⁵⁹ Evidently, the higher wages brought greater financial security, which stimulated more purchases. The increase was less remarkable for the next wage level. Servants earning between £21 and £40 per annum each purchased

⁵⁸ HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1800*.

⁵⁹ See Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4. HBC's British servants' per capita purchases by wage, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: Only the entries that could be matched to a servant and for whom a corresponding wage was identifiable were included. The per capita purchases were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of goods for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800.

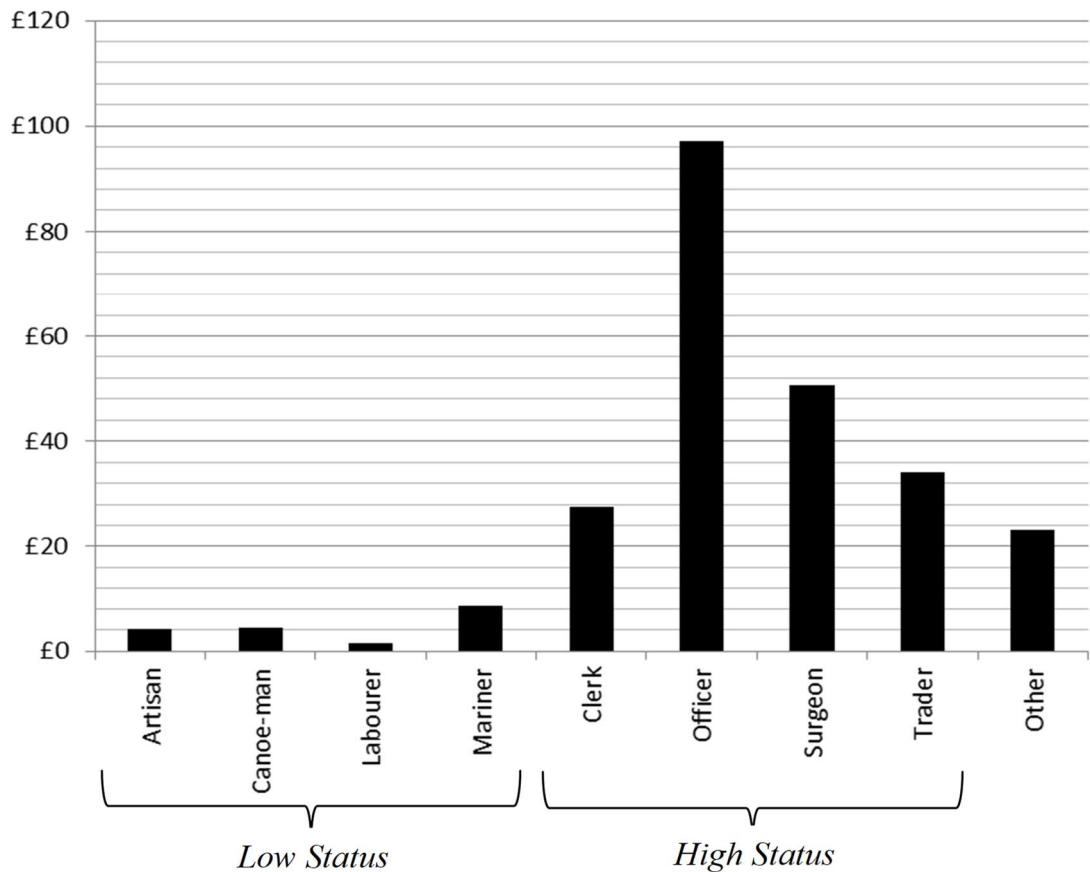
Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-1813; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts*, 1783-1815.

£15.49 worth of goods over the period. In other words, wages doubled while the value of their purchases tripled. The most critical point, however, appears to have occurred at the next wage level. At £94.06, there was a six-fold increase in the per capita purchases of the £41-70 category.⁶⁰ Thus it appears that servants at this wage level were far more inclined to order goods from the Company. For the top earners, their spending took a linear form; their wages approximately doubled and their per capita purchases followed suit (£204.56). To sum up, the lowest paid workers were unlikely to use their meagre earnings to order imported commodities, while the 'middling servants' purchases actually resembled a similar spend to wage ratio than that of the highest earners.

Wages and origins do not, however, account for all of the variations in the servants' spending patterns. The servant's occupation was another factor. Figure 6.5 shows the per capita purchases of the British servants employed by the Company according to their occupation, and Table 6.1 shows the average annual wage that was paid to these vocations. The 'low status' occupations were the ones who ordered the lowest value of goods from the Company but the roles within this grouping were not ranked in the same

⁶⁰ See Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.5. HBC's British servants' per capita purchases by occupation, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: Only the entries that could be matched to a servant and for whom a corresponding occupation was identifiable were included. The per capita purchases were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of goods for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800. See Table 6.1 for a discussion of the vocations that are contained within these occupational groups.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-1813; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts*, 1783-1815.

order as average earnings. Labourers were the lowest spenders and poorest earners, and mariners were the highest spenders and richest earners but this was not the case for canoe-men and artisans. Canoe-men actually spent slightly more despite earning £6 less than the artisans, with a spend of £4.45 for the canoe-men as opposed to £4.19 for the artisans. It seems, therefore, that mobility influenced consumption. This difference probably indicates that the canoe-men's travels impacted upon their consumer spending, either for practical or sentimental reasons. Indeed, the increased distance away from the more populated posts on Hudson's Bay perhaps accentuated these servants feeling of detachment from their home communities, which prompted the purchase of goods that reminded them of home. For the 'high status' occupations, per capita purchases and wages were in accordance but there are still a number of unexpected observations. The surgeons

Table 6.1. Average annual wage of occupations employed by the HBC in North America in the year 1800 (in £).

	<i>Low Status</i>				<i>High Status</i>			
	Artisan ^a	Canoe-men ^b	Labourer	Mariner ^c	Clerk ^d	Officer ^e	Surgeon	Trader ^f
Wage	20.72	14.31	9.29	24.65	17.40	58.42	40.00	40.04

Notes: The average wages were calculated from the wages stated in the HBC's list of servants for the year 1800 and for which a corresponding occupation was identifiable.

^a includes armourer, blacksmith, boat builder, bricklayer, builder, canoe builder, carpenter, cooper, distiller, engineer, joiner, mason, millwright, net maker, oil boiler, sawyer, smith, tailor, and shipwright;

^b consists of boat-man, boat steerer, bowsman, canoe-man, craft master, middleman, pilot, patrol, patrol of small craft, patrol of the woods, runner to Indians, and steersman;

^c includes harpooners, mates of the brig, schooner, or sloop; masters of the brig, schooner, shallop, or sloop; sailors; seamen; and whalers;

^d comprises accountant, assistant, clerk, storekeeper, and writer;

^e consists of chiefs, factors, locum tenens, masters, residents, seconds, and superintendents;

^f includes inland trader, interpreter, linguist, and trader.

Source: HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1800.

and traders were paid similar amounts but their spending is somewhat different. The per capita purchases of the surgeons was £50.74 while it was only £34.80 for the traders. Like canoe-men, traders spent much of their time in the interior and this seems to have had the effect of lowering their per capita purchases below what would be expected rather than increasing it. On average, officers were paid a third more than surgeons but their per capita purchases were almost double. It therefore appears that the officers' superior position induced them to order more goods from the Company. For the clerks, even though they were only paid around £17.40 per annum, their per capita purchases came to £27.63. Thus while they were paid £3 less than artisans, they spent more than six times what the artisans did. Indeed, the clerks spending pattern was actually akin to that of the officers for while they were paid 70 per cent less than their superiors they also purchased 72 per cent less. The clerks' and officers' orders therefore appear to have shared a similar pattern, with each spending a comparable proportion of their wages. This may well be because the clerks were the servants that were most frequently promoted into the officer class and their purchases thus reflected this occurrence. Above all, this synopsis of the servants' purchases in relation to their performed duties indicates that wages alone do not entirely account for the servants' consumer behaviour.

Alongside the plethora of trade goods that were intended to entice Aboriginal traders to part with their trapped furs, the Company's ships were stuffed with cotton shirts, Britannia tea pots, riveted china bowls, gingerbread, watches, coloured ribbons, and many

other commodities that had been ordered by the Company's overseas servants. In order to establish the servants' spending priorities, the ordered commodities were assigned into 'consumer' and 'producer' goods. Consumer goods were generally finished items that were ready to be 'consumed', whereas producer goods were primarily tools and equipment that were required by certain occupations to carry out their duties. Consumer goods is a particularly large and unwieldy category and so was further broken down into dress, food and drink, household goods, books, and other consumer items.⁶¹

Table 6.2 shows all the Company's servants' purchases of consumer and producer goods; 91 per cent of the purchases relate to consumer goods, whereas only 9 per cent are associated with producer goods. This was somewhat expected. The servants were employees and their employers supplied the majority of the tools, equipment, and raw materials that were required to undertake their professions, although it is clear that there were some items in short supply. Basic hardware such as knives and scissors comprised a significant proportion of the purchased producer goods but there was also a sizeable number of specialised instruments that many of the servants appear to have purchased on their own account so that they could adequately perform their duties. Telescopes, spyglasses, sextants, artificial horizons, thermometers, compasses, barometers, and drawing instruments were frequently requested. Many of these items were essential for navigational purposes and for scientific observations. There were noticeable instances, however, when these devices exceeded mere practical utility. For example, in 1799, the famed explorer Peter Fidler purchased a nine-inch ivory sector and a six-inch ivory protractor to the combined cost of £2 13s.⁶² Put another way, Fidler spent over a fifth of the entire annual wage of the average labourer on two standard instruments. William Auld, the master of Churchill Factory who originated from Edinburgh, did something similar.⁶³ In 1811, Auld acquired three sets of wooden stamps for the making of his own thermometer scales for which the HBC charged 7s. 6d.⁶⁴ The first set of stamps were 'figures of the special size', the second set were 'letters consisting of the whole alphabet of the same size as the figures', and the final were 'letters of small capitals'. The purchases made by Fidler and Auld highlight the fact that even producer goods could be decorative and thus acquired the additional purpose of displaying the owner's wealth and social status. Producer goods could also acquire leisurely functions. James Clouston, an

⁶¹ See Table 6.2 for a discussion of what these categories contain.

⁶² HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 59.

⁶³ HBC Biographical Sheets, 'William Auld'.

⁶⁴ HBCA, A.16/113, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1810-97, fo. 3.

Table 6.2. HBC's servants' purchases of consumer and producer goods, 1787-1813 (in £).

	1787-1800	1801-1813	Total
<i>Consumer Goods</i>			
Dress ^a	757 (43%)	2,424 (51%)	3,182 (49%)
Food & Drink	290 (16%)	1,182 (25%)	1,472 (22%)
Household Goods ^b	116 (7%)	217 (5%)	333 (5%)
Books	259 (15%)	286 (6%)	545 (8%)
Other ^c	190 (11%)	243 (5%)	434 (7%)
Total	1,612 (91%)	4,352 (91%)	5,966 (91%)
<i>Producer Goods ^d</i>			
Total	155 (9%)	433 (9%)	589 (9%)
Overall Total	1,767	4,785	6,555

Notes: Other entries in the account books that are not included in the above table are either illegible, indistinguishable, or pertain to 'slops, carriage & portage'. The total value of the discounted entries is £795.

^a includes textiles, clothing, accessories, haberdashery, and personal adornments;

^b comprises commodities that are primarily associated with the domestic living space such as bedding, cooking, cleaning and washing equipment, decorations, furniture, lighting, stationary, and tableware;

^c primarily consists of armaments and other items relating to leisure such as musical instruments;

^d contains tools (largely knives and scissors), equipment required for navigation and scientific observation (sextants, thermometers, etc.), raw materials (dyestuffs, mercury, etc.), and heavyweight textiles for tents (canvas, 'ravenduck', and Russia sheeting).

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897.

Orcadian schoolteacher at Eastmain House, requested a telescope that was capable of observing the passing of Jupiter's satellites.⁶⁵ The most vivid example is provided by a clerk from London. In 1804, Thomas Swain purchased a '3/2 feet achromatic telescope with mahogany table and brass stand one eye to be for day objects three for astronomy, rackwork sliding rods &c in a mahogany box'.⁶⁶ The cost of the device was a staggering £31 10s. and Swain was only paid around £30 per year at this time.⁶⁷ In certain cases then, producer goods could perform alternative functions and edge into the realm of consumer goods.

The bulk of the servants' purchases were related to dress, food and drink, household goods, books, and other consumer items, and Table 6.2 shows the servants' purchases for

⁶⁵ No cost was recorded for the telescope and so it appears unlikely that the item was actually sourced and despatched. HBCA, A.16/113, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1810-97, fo. 2; and HBC Biographical Sheets, 'James Clouston'.

⁶⁶ HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 20.

⁶⁷ HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1800, fo. 37.

each of these articles. The highest purchases were for articles of dress. This category consisted of any item that was worn or used to decorate the body and included textiles, clothing, accessories, haberdashery, and personal adornments. Almost half of the servants' purchases were for these sorts of consumer goods. The second highest category was food and drink which accounted for 22 per cent of the orders. These purchases were mainly for non-essential foodstuffs such as tea, sugar, and gingerbread. Dress and food and drink comprised 78 per cent of the purchases of consumer goods. The remaining purchases were spread fairly equally between household goods (6 per cent), books (9 per cent), and other consumer goods that were primarily for leisure (7 per cent). Dividing the period in half reveals some interesting shifts in consumption. The overall proportions spent on producer goods remained the same between 1787-1800 and 1801-13 but this was not the case for the sub-categories within consumer goods. Dress and food and drink actually increased in importance, rising from 43 to 51 per cent and 16 to 25 per cent respectively. The other categories declined in importance, most noticeably that for books which fell from 15 to 6 per cent. Why this change occurred is not entirely clear but it took place in the context of an expanding British and North American workforce as well as increased ventures into the interior. What is clear beyond doubt is that the servants' purchases of perishable consumer items vastly outweighed their spending on durable and semi-durable consumer goods. Indeed, spending on books alone was higher than that spent on household goods. The proportion of the servants' purchases assigned to each of the five types of consumer goods is similar to that found by Nash in his study of the mercantile inventories of South Carolina merchants in the mid-eighteenth century.⁶⁸ For consumer goods, Nash found that the composition of the merchants' inventories were as follows: dress (textiles, clothing/haberdashery) comprised 68 per cent, food and drink (groceries) made up 16 per cent, household goods (bedding and domestic hardware) accounted for 10 per cent, books (1 per cent), and other goods (6 per cent).⁶⁹ The most striking difference between Nash's findings and the HBC's servants' orders is that the servants purchased more books (9 per cent).⁷⁰ Perhaps this reflected the lack of amenities in Hudson's Bay.

When the purchases are analysed according to the servants' place of origin a number of differences between the British and North American servants are apparent.

⁶⁸ Nash, 'Domestic Material Culture', p. 29.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷⁰ See Table 6.2.

Table 6.3. HBC's servants' per capita purchases of consumer and producer goods by place of origin, 1787-1813 (in £).

	British Isles	North America
<i>Consumer Goods</i>		
Dress	4.28 (45%)	34.41 (54%)
Food & Drink	2.02 (21%)	15.08 (24%)
Household Goods	0.54 (6%)	2.76 (4%)
Books	1.14 (12%)	0.58 (1%)
Other	0.62 (7%)	3.93 (6%)
Total	8.60 (91%)	56.76 (90%)
<i>Producer Goods</i>		
Total	0.82 (9%)	6.53 (10%)
Overall Total	9.42	63.29

Notes: Only the entries that could be matched to a servant and for whom a corresponding place of origin was identifiable were included. The per capita purchases were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of consumer and producer goods for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800.

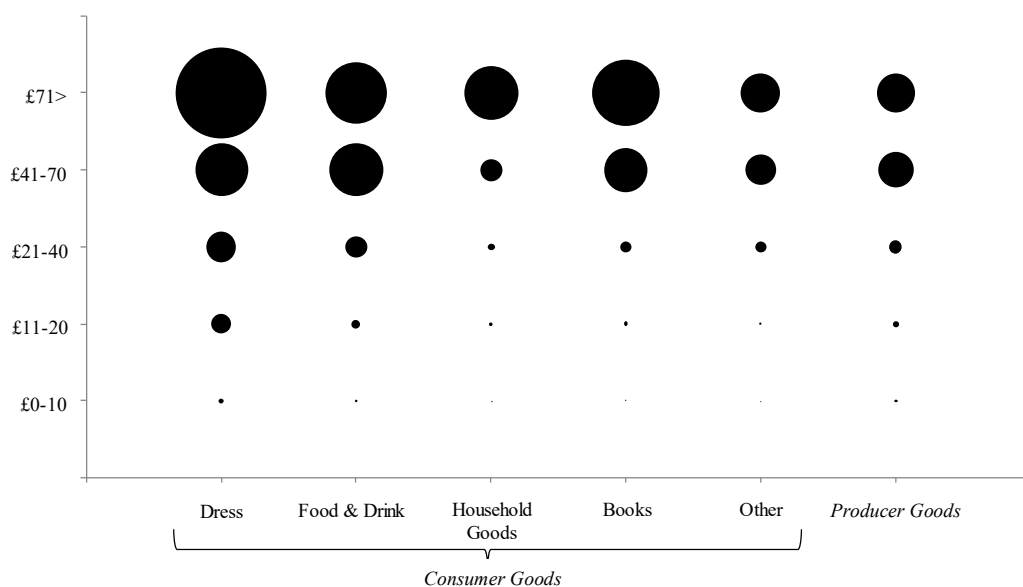
Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-1813; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts*, 1783-1815.

Table 6.3 shows that those who permanently lived in North America spent far less on books than did the British servants and opted instead to allocate a greater proportion of their spending on articles of dress and food and drink. This discrepancy between the two sets of consumers somewhat explains some of the differences previously noted when the period was analysed in two halves. Even so, both sets of servants shared the inclination to distribute the majority of their spending towards dress and non-essential foodstuffs.

A comparison of the British servants' wages and their per capita purchases of consumer and producer goods offers a number of insights into the servants' consumer behaviour (Figure 6.6). Major shifts in the types of commodities that the servants ordered occurred as their wages increased. Per capita purchases across each of the categories did not increase in a linear way as wages rose. In the lowest income level, where purchases were very limited, servants principally ordered items of dress (55 per cent), producer goods (27 per cent), and food and drink (14 per cent), and spent very little on books (4 per cent) or household and other consumer goods (0 per cent).⁷¹ When wages were effectively doubled in the next income classification the servants' purchases markedly

⁷¹ See Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.6. HBC's British servants' per capita purchases of consumer and producer goods by wage, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: The size of the circle indicates the per capita purchases which were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of consumer and producer goods for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-1813; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts*, 1783-1815.

increased, largely because purchases for the lowest earners were so restricted. As was discussed in the previous section, the servants' overall purchases did not usually adhere to a linear relationship with wages and neither, it seems, did the proportions allocated to each category of goods. In other words, they shifted in accordance with the servants' changing priorities. While per capita purchases in the £11-£20 category increased for all of the commodity groups, it was not evenly distributed. Dress maintained its position as the main article purchased but its share of overall spending increased to 73 per cent. Producer goods, on the other hand, lost out and fell to third-place in the commodity rankings, equating to 6 per cent of purchases. Even though its share remained unchanged, food and drink now accounted for the second highest purchase. The proportion spent on books remained static at 4 per cent but household and other consumer goods advanced slightly to encompass 2 and 1 per cent. It seems, therefore, that improving attire was the servant's key objective at this income level.

The next wage increment (£21-£40) stimulated further modifications to the commodities that the servants ordered from the Company. Per capita purchases of dress doubled in line with the increase in wages but the growth in the purchase of other items

was more notable. Purchases of producer and household goods quadrupled while that of books and food and drink increased six-fold.⁷² The growth in purchases of other consumer goods, most of which were associated with leisurely pursuits, was even more pronounced at 18 times the previous amount. Indeed, the spending that was promoted by the rise in wages was primarily channelled towards leisure and supplementing diets. As a consequence of these changes, the proportion of spending allocated to the different categories altered once again. Dress was still the main purchase but its share had fallen to 50 per cent of the amount spent. The proportion allocated to food and drink increased to 25 per cent and it remained the second highest per capita purchase. Producer goods stayed third (9 per cent) while the other consumer goods jumped to fourth-place (7 per cent).⁷³ Books were fifth with a rounded share of 7 per cent whereas household goods languished at 3 per cent. It is clear that the servants at this income level spent their earnings on a wider variety of goods than those on lower wages and particularly focused on acquiring non-essential foodstuffs.

It was, however, in the £41-£70 category where the most dramatic and wide-ranging changes occurred. As noted previously, at this stage wages roughly doubled yet spending increased six-fold. Once again, the increase in the servants' spending was not evenly distributed across all commodity groups. The three-fold increase in the value of dress purchases was overshadowed by a rapid growth in the amount spent on other items. The value of the orders increased six-fold for food and drink, seven-fold for the miscellaneous consumer goods, eight-fold for producer goods, nine-fold for household goods, and most impressive of all, spending on books was 16 times greater than it was previously. It is clear that the servants at this wage level not only spent a greater proportion of their earnings but used them to acquire a far more extensive range of goods than those with lower wages. This deduction is further confirmed by analysing the way in which the £41-£70 servants distributed their spending. The highest per capita purchase was no longer dress which accounted for 27 per cent of purchases but food and drink which comprised 28 per cent.⁷⁴ Indeed, this was the only wage level where apparel did not top the spending list. Books supplied one of the most substantial changes. They ascended to 19 per cent of the purchases, and comprised the third highest per capita purchase. The remaining goods made further headway. Producer goods now made up 12 per cent of the purchases and

⁷² See Figure 6.6.

⁷³ See Figure 6.6.

⁷⁴ See Figure 6.6.

other consumer goods comprised 9 per cent. Yet again, household goods came up last with a share of 5 per cent. In light of the considerable growth in purchases and the proliferation of this spending across a wide spectrum of goods, it seems that this income level was of profound importance for consumers. Was this a case of the ‘middling servants’ leading the ‘consumer revolution’?

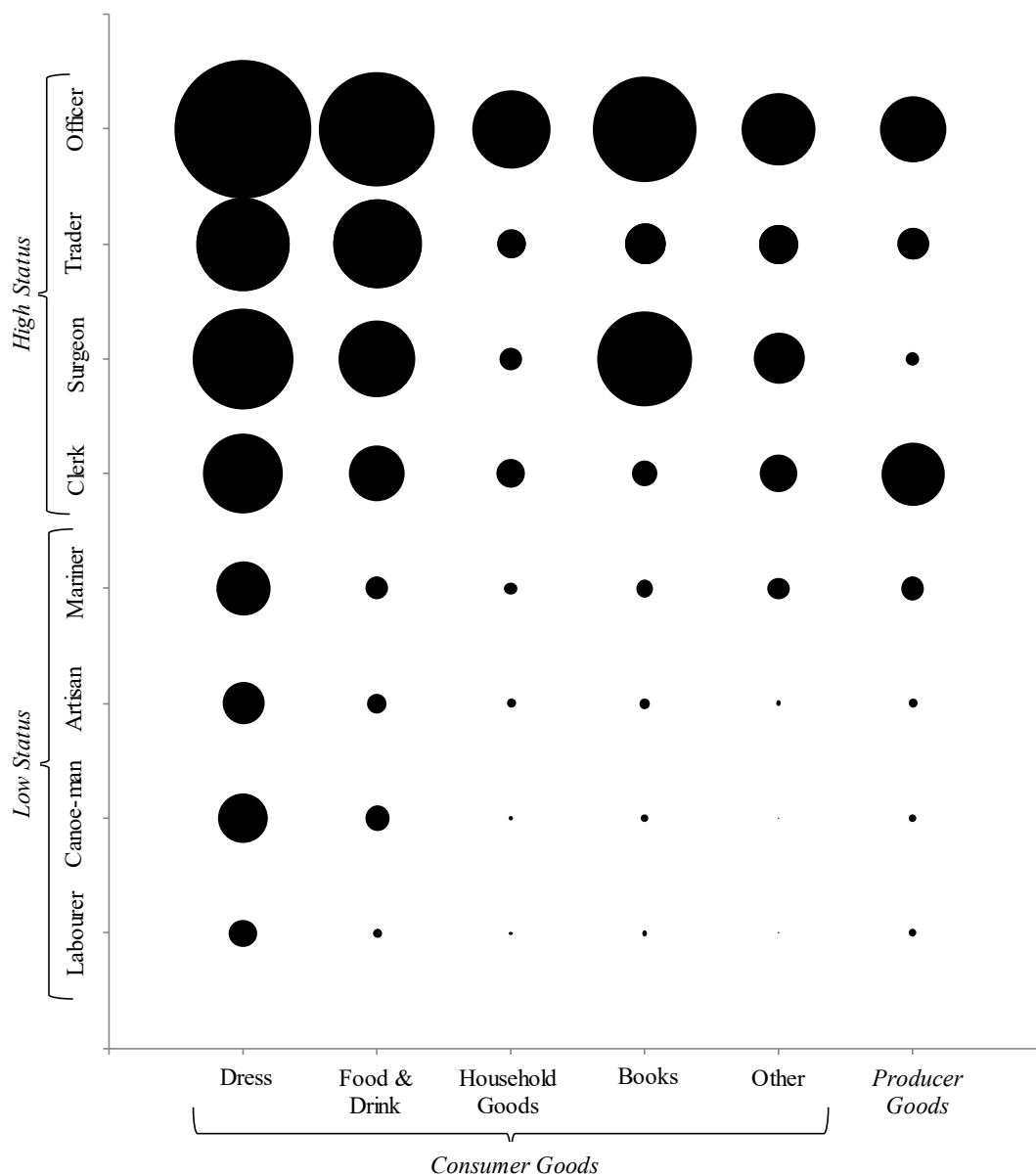
For the highest earners, dress and household goods were the two articles where the servants focused their increased spending. Dress purchases were three times higher than was the case for the £41-70 servants, and their purchase of household goods was six times higher.⁷⁵ Spending in the other categories either developed in line with, or were slightly below the increase in wages. The rankings of the commodity groups shifted yet again in accordance with these uneven growth rates. Dress resumed its place as the highest per capita purchase at 37 per cent, and books assumed second place with a share of 20 per cent, surpassing spending on food and drink which now only accounted for 17 per cent of the purchases. The share allocated to household goods increased to 13 per cent, while producer and other consumer goods both declined to 7 per cent. It seems, therefore, that the ‘elite’ servants distinguished themselves from their subordinates by spending lavishly on the more decorative items of dress and household goods. The purchases of the other commodities had apparently reached a decisive stage in the previous wage distribution.

This analysis of the servants’ purchases in relation to their wages undoubtedly shows that as the servants’ earnings increased their spending priorities changed. In other words, as their wages increased their purchases of producer and the various kinds of consumer goods did not progress in a parallel fashion. The servants instead focused their efforts on purchasing specific types of commodities at each wage distribution. Sometimes this took the form of improving one sort of good, while at others — such as in the case of the ‘critical’ £41-£70 wage level — changes to consumer spending were remarkably diverse and wide-ranging.

Before looking in greater depth at the specific commodities purchased by the servants, it is useful to consider what effect a servant’s occupation had on the commodities that they ordered. Figure 6.7 shows the servants’ per capita purchases on the six commodity groups in relation to their occupation. With a share of between 60 and 80 per cent, the low status occupations assigned a much greater proportion of their spending towards items of dress than did their high status counterparts, who only apportioned 30 to 40 per cent. Interestingly, the canoe-men distributed 19 per cent of their

⁷⁵ See Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.7. HBC's British servants' per capita purchases of consumer and producer goods by occupation, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: The size of the circle indicates the per capita purchases which were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of consumer and producer goods for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800. See Table 6.1 for a discussion of the vocations that are contained within these occupational groups.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-1813; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts*, 1783-1815.

purchases to food and drink whereas the labourers only assigned 9 per cent. Similarly, the traders allotted 37 per cent of their spending towards food and drink, which was substantially greater than that of the clerks, officers, and surgeons who only apportioned around 20 per cent. It seems that those who worked inland were more inclined to purchase

additional foodstuffs, perhaps as a way to ensure that they had access to such ‘luxuries’ in the remote interior. Per capita purchases of books also showed great variation. The officers’ purchases accounted for 48 per cent of the spending on books but only comprised 18 per cent of their total spending. The surgeons, however, were more disposed to purchase books, assigning 32 per cent of their spending to this end whereas the traders and clerks both allocated less than 10 per cent. In addition, the clerks and officers appear to have shared certain aspects of their material culture. Both occupations apportioned a similar share of their purchases towards extra foodstuffs and other consumer goods.

IV. *Dress in the Sub-Arctic*

The servants assigned almost half of the goods purchased in their orders towards adorning their bodies. Textiles, clothing, accessories, haberdashery, and personal adornments were imperative items of daily life and many servants placed orders with the Company for such goods. Which of these items were more important? What exactly did the servants spend their money on within these categories and why? And who spent their earnings on what?

Table 6.4 shows how the servants’ purchases were distributed across the major items of dress. Accounting for 46 per cent of spending, the bulk of the servant’s purchases related to personal adornments. These were overwhelming for watches and the chains that attached to them which allowed them to be easily pulled from a waistcoat pocket and for the personal seals to which they were also frequently adjoined.⁷⁶ Pocket watches were expensive items and could comprise a significant proportion of a servant’s annual wage. In 1793, William Linklater, an Orkneyman employed as a steward, paid £7 1s. for a jewelled silver watch with an accompanying chain and seal.⁷⁷ This was a considerable expense for an individual who only earned £15 per annum. There are many other examples of low-paid servants acquiring these illustrious timepieces. John Park, another Orcadian, worked as a canoe-man on an annual wage of £25 and in 1805 paid £9 1s. for a new silver watch.⁷⁸ That same year another canoe-man, John Moore, purchased a silver watch that cost 70 per cent of his yearly wage.⁷⁹ The Company’s officers were not to be

⁷⁶ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 104-5.

⁷⁷ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 19; and HBCA, A.30/5, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1791-3, fo. 81.

⁷⁸ HBC Biographical Sheets, ‘John Park’; HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 38; and HBCA, A.30/10-11, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1800-12, fo. 35, 28.

⁷⁹ Moore was paid around £16 per annum and the watch cost £11 3s. See HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 39; and HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1800, fo. 34.

Table 6.4. HBC servants' purchases of articles of dress, 1787-1813 (in £).

	1787-1800	1801-1813	Total
<i>Accessories^a</i>			
Hats & Caps	27 (76%)	138 (58%)	165 (60%)
Shawls	0	54 (23%)	54 (20%)
Other ^b	9 (24%)	42 (19%)	51 (20%)
Total	36 (5%)	234 (10%)	270 (9%)
<i>Clothing^a</i>			
Upper Body ^c	29 (51%)	198 (80%)	228 (74%)
Lower Body ^d	29 (49%)	51 (20%)	79 (26%)
Total	58 (8%)	249 (11%)	307 (10%)
<i>Haberdashery^a</i>			
Buttons	7 (23%)	63 (19%)	70 (20%)
Ribbons	16 (54%)	183 (56%)	199 (56%)
Other	7 (23%)	79 (24%)	86 (24%)
Total	30 (4%)	325 (14%)	355 (12%)
<i>Personal Adornment^a</i>			
Buckles	19 (3%)	1 (0%)	20 (1%)
Watches, Chains & Seals	534 (93%)	773 (94%)	1,307 (93%)
Other ^e	22 (4%)	52 (6%)	74 (5%)
Total	575 (77%)	826 (36%)	1,401 (46%)
<i>Textiles^a</i>			
Cottons ^f	13 (30%)	120 (18%)	133 (19%)
Linens	3 (7%)	32 (5%)	35 (5%)
Silks	3 (6%)	9 (1%)	12 (2%)
Woollens ^g	25 (56%)	513 (76%)	538 (75%)
Total	44 (6%)	674 (29%)	718 (24%)
Overall Total	743	2,308	3,051

Notes: Entries that included more than one sub-category and no individual cost for each item were discounted. The omissions are to the value of £106.

^a the percentages included alongside each sub-category relate to the overall purchases of the respective category. The percentages stated in the category totals correlate to the overall total;

^b primarily consists of belts, handkerchiefs, neckcloths, umbrellas, and wigs;

^c clothing worn above the waist which is mainly comprised of shirts and waistcoat pieces;

^d clothing worn on or below the waist such as gartering, shoes, and stockings;

^e includes broaches, earrings, jewellery, necklaces, and rings;

^f contains calicos, chintz, cottons, fustian, gingham, nankeens, Scotch crape, and velveteen;

^g comprises cloth (Broad, Scarlet, second, superfine, fine), corduroy, flannel, gauze (Scotch), Highland Plaid, kerseymere, woollens, worsteds, and worsted lace.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*.

Table 6.5. HBC's servants' purchases of watches, chains, and seals, 1787-1813 (in £).

	1787-1800	1801-1813	Total
<i>Watches, Chains & Seals</i>			
New ^a	379 (71%)	512 (66%)	891 (68%)
Repairs ^b	155 (29%)	261 (34%)	416 (32%)
Total	534	773	1,307
Percentage of Consumer Goods	33	18	22

Notes: Watches, chains and seals were commonly purchased at the same time and are therefore usually recorded in the same entries in the account books.

^a includes a few entries where a new watch was purchased and another was simultaneously repaired but since the new watch comprised the bulk of the purchase cost they do not significantly alter the findings; ^b improvements to the watches were occasionally recorded alongside the customary 'cleaning and repairing'.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*.

outdone and sometimes spent even more on their watches or attempted to make them more elaborate. George Gladman, the second-officer at Moose Factory who was from London, acquired 'a new silver gilt watch' that was 'capt [capped] and jewelled' for £8 8s.⁸⁰ The master of the Beaver Brig, George Taylor from Berwick in Northumberland, spent £12 on a new capped and jewelled watch in 1795, which was perhaps partially induced by his promotion to the captainship of a brig as opposed to the smaller sloop that he had commanded the previous year.⁸¹ An elevation in social status then, especially one that granted an allowance for a servant, dictated that an improvement be made to a gentleman's watch. The timepieces of the Company's postmasters were in another league. William Auld spent £36 15s. on a 'jewelled and silver capt [capped]... chronometer with 6 holes'.⁸²

New purchases were not the only way in which money was spent on watches as they were still, even by the end of the eighteenth century, somewhat unreliable and so required regular maintenance.⁸³ Table 6.5 shows that nearly one-third of the purchases on watches and their related accessories were for repairs to be carried out. Thus, not only did the acquisition of a watch require a significant amount of capital it also entailed a

⁸⁰ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1802*, fo. 66; and HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1800*, fo. 16.

⁸¹ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1802*, fo. 25; and HBCA, A.30/6, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1794-5*, fos. 36, 82.

⁸² HBC Biographical Sheets, 'William Auld'; and HBCA, A.16/113, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions, 1810-97*, fo. 21.

⁸³ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 98-9.

considerable financial commitment to keep it in working order. In order to satisfy the requests of its servants, the HBC kept up a roaring trade with London watchmakers. Joseph Jolly at Dean Street, Fetter's Lane, and William Fidgett at Bell Court, Fenchurch Street, were the two favoured watchmakers that both supplied new watches and repaired and improved existing ones for the Company's servants during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁸⁴

Why did the Company's servants purchase watches? In 1967, E. P. Thompson, in his pioneering article 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism' associated the substantial rise in clock and watch ownership at the end of the eighteenth century with the advent of industrial capitalism in England.⁸⁵ The 'tyranny of the clock' was born as the factory system dictated a greater synchronisation of labour than more task-orientated crafts. Over the past few decades, however, a number of historians have established that the labouring classes had begun to acquire watches and clocks in the late seventeenth century, and thus long before the initial stages of the industrial revolution.⁸⁶ Pocket watches were a 'multi-faceted asset' and it was this capacity to serve several different functions that made it appeal to 'every rank of men'.⁸⁷ Different groups of servants no doubt placed greater emphasis on a particular aspect of watch ownership. For the canoe-man and the sailor, a watches ability to serve as a portable store of wealth was probably of greater importance than it was for the Company's officers who used their timepieces to convey their position in the Company's hierarchy, while the novelty of a watch probably appealed equally to both.⁸⁸ Watches were a key step in the visualisation of clock time and were so successful because: they had utility value, acted as a form of investment, displayed status and identity, and satisfied their owner's curiosity for all things mechanical. In the frontier society of Hudson's Bay then, watches were commonplace

⁸⁴ The first indication that the HBC conducted business with Joseph Jolly was in 1787 and the first mention of William Fidgett was in 1796. See A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1802*, fos. 12, 15, 32, 37.

⁸⁵ See E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, No. 38 (1967), pp. 56-97.

⁸⁶ See Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, 'Reworking E. P. Thompson's "Time, Work-discipline and Industrial Capitalism"', *Time and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1996), pp. 275-300; Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales 1300-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), especially pp. 109-10, 125; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 25-8; and Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 97-107.

⁸⁷ Moira Donald, "'The Greatest Necessity for Every Rank of Men': Gender, Clocks and Watches', in Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe, eds., *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 54-75.

⁸⁸ Glennie and Thrift, *Shaping the Day*, pp. 176, 419; Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, 'The Spaces of Clock Times' in Patrick Joyce, ed., *The Social in Question: New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 151-74; and Thompson, 'Time', p. 70.

consumer items, which is perhaps as far an environment as one can get from the ‘dark-satanic mills’ of the early British industrial revolution.

Servants were also willing to invest in seals that were usually attached to the chain that held a watch and its key.⁸⁹ Seals could be made out of a number of materials and signalled the owners identity in a variety of ways. A tailor, Magnus Garrock, purchased a black seal cypher in 1795.⁹⁰ Peter Fidler asked for a stone seal cypher with the initials PF in 1794 which cost a reasonably inexpensive 7s..⁹¹ Several other servants also requested seals that were engraved with their initials. The London surgeon, Mark S. Fielding had his gold seal and cypher etched with MSF to the cost of £2 14s. 10d.⁹² Louis Jolicoeur, a French-Canadian labourer had his gold seal that was worth £1 8s. engraved with LJC.⁹³ Seals could also bare the servants’ identity in more distinctive ways. Arwell Sutherland, a sailor, requested a silver seal with the cypher AS and a crest of the Sutherland clan which consisted of a cat and the motto ‘sans peur’ meaning ‘without fear’ of which the Company had to source from a specialist tradesmen by the name of Mr Hill.⁹⁴ Similarly, the writer Joseph Howie from Cirencester in Gloucestershire ordered a gold seal cypher with a crest of his initials and a demi Lion rampart to the value of £2 8s.⁹⁵ The ownership of watches and seals was thus not restricted to the more affluent servants and they were seemingly in wide usage amongst the Company’s English, Scottish, and North American employees. In contrast to the vast amounts that were spent on watches, chains, and seals, little was spent on buckles, one of the hallmarks of the Birmingham ‘toy’ trades and one of the manufactures that Maxine Berg identified as playing a key part in the global trade of British consumer goods at the end of the eighteenth century.⁹⁶ Purchases of earrings, necklaces, rings, and other forms of jewellery were also small in comparison to the vast sums that were spent on watches and their related auxiliaries, and it is clear that many of these items were for the servants’ companions and children in Hudson’s Bay.

⁸⁹ Styles, *Dress of the People*, p. 103.

⁹⁰ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 26; and HBCA, A.30/6, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1794-5, fo. 6.

⁹¹ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 23.

⁹² HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 68; and HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1800, fo. 24.

⁹³ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 56; and HBCA, A.30/9, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1799, fo. 7.

⁹⁴ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 26; and HBCA, A.30/6, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1794-5, fo. 65.

⁹⁵ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 56; and HBCA, A.30/9, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1799, fo. 25.

⁹⁶ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 167-8, 306-7.

Table 6.6. HBC's servants' purchases of cottons, linens, silks, and woollens, 1787-1813 (in £).

	Cottons ^c	Linens ^d	Silks ^e	Woollens ^f
<i>Accessories</i>				
1787-1800 ^a	1 (3%)	0	1 (12%)	0
1801-1813 ^a	19 (7%)	3 (9%)	15 (24%)	0
Total ^b	20 (50%)	3 (8%)	16 (42%)	0
<i>Clothing</i>				
1787-1800 ^a	18 (56%)	0	0	0
1801-1813 ^a	146 (51%)	0	2 (3%)	3 (1%)
Total ^b	164 (97%)	0	2 (1%)	3 (2%)
<i>Haberdashery</i>				
1787-1800 ^a	0	0	7 (63%)	0
1801-1813 ^a	0	0	37 (59%)	0
Total ^b	0 (1%)	0	44 (98%)	0 (1%)
<i>Textiles</i>				
1787-1800 ^a	13 (41%)	3 (100%)	3 (25%)	25 (100%)
1801-1813 ^a	120 (38%)	32 (91%)	9 (14%)	513 (99%)
Total ^b	133 (19%)	35 (5%)	12 (2%)	538 (75%)
<i>Overall Totals</i>				
1787-1800 ^b	32 (45%)	3 (4%)	11 (15%)	25 (35%)
1801-1813 ^b	285 (32%)	35 (4%)	63 (7%)	516 (57%)
Total ^b	317 (33%)	38 (4%)	74 (8%)	541 (56%)

Notes: Entries that included more than one material were discounted.

^a the percentages relate to the total purchases of each material;

^b the percentages correspond to the total purchases across all materials;

^c contains calicos (printed, shawls, and shirts), chintz, cottons (binding, handkerchiefs, shirts, stockings, striped, and twilled), fustian, gingham, muslin, nankeens, Scotch crape, and velveteen;

^d consists of cambric and linens (Irish, printed, and plain);

^e includes gold lace and silks (string, thread, twist, sewing, tailors, handkerchiefs, waistcoat piece, and hat coverings).

^f comprises cloth (Broad, Scarlet, second, superfine, fine), corduroy, flannel, gauze (Scotch), Highland Plaid, kerseymere, woollens, worsteds, and worsted lace.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1897.

Textiles were the second highest purchase within the dress category (24 per cent).⁹⁷ Woollen fabrics were the principal request and accounted for three-quarters of textile spending. Cottons were second and comprised around a fifth of the servants' purchases whereas those for linen and silk were rather limited.⁹⁸ In the sub-arctic climate of

⁹⁷ See Table 6.4.

⁹⁸ See Table 6.4.

Hudson's Bay, it is not surprising that the servants weighted their purchases firmly in favour of the generally heavier, warmer, and more durable woollens than towards the lightweight textiles. Indeed, the purchases of woollens actually became more pronounced over the period as the percentage share allocated to woollen textiles rose from 56 in 1787-1800 to 76 in 1801-13.⁹⁹ While it seems reasonable that the consumption of the thinner and more expensive silks and that of the cooler linens would be restricted, it is not that surprising that a sizeable proportion pertained to the light-weight and less insulating cottons, as these were often worn as undergarments.¹⁰⁰

As Table 6.6 shows, if spending on the identifiable fabrics used in clothing, haberdashery, and accessories are included with the textiles then purchases of cottons is shown to be one-third rather one-fifth. In a study of the textiles contained in Montreal merchant inventories between 1760-74, DuPlessis found that linens and woollens each accounted for 34 per cent of the stocked textiles, and cottons accounted for 23 per cent.¹⁰¹ It seems, therefore, that instead of purchasing linens (4 per cent of purchases in Table 6.6), the HBC's servants purchased cottons, and, understandably, mostly purchased woollens. Ready-made cotton garments actually made up a greater proportion of 'cottons' than cotton textiles did, although there was no shift in the proportion between the two forms over the period. The finished cottons were primarily for cotton or calico shirts and were requested in various sizes by a wide range of servants. For example, in 1811, the Orkney labourer Robert Rowland acquired 12 cotton shirts for 5s. 6d. each.¹⁰² In 1805, '3 dozen boys calico shirts and 1 dozen infants calico shirts' were requested by an Orcadian canoe-men by the name of Benjamin Bruce for which he was charged £9 3s.¹⁰³ Two years later Bruce placed another large order for shirts. These were all to be striped calico and 12 were for infants, 24 for boys, and 12 for youths.¹⁰⁴ Cottons were also slightly favoured over silks for shawls, handkerchiefs, and other accessories. Silk thread was, however, the dominant fabric that was used in haberdashery. While this could be because silk was more often specified it probably shows that while silk was expensive it was admired by servants who sought to use it to provide a fashionable finishing effect to their hand-made clothes.

⁹⁹ See Table 6.4.

¹⁰⁰ DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, p. 115; and Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 86-7, 95.

¹⁰¹ DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, p. 66.

¹⁰² HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Rowland'; and HBCA, A.16/113, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1810-97, fo. 10.

¹⁰³ HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Benjamin Bruce'; and HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 35.

¹⁰⁴ HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 61.

Haberdashery was the servants' third highest purchase within the dress category (Table 6.4), which, when combined with spending on textiles, shows that the purchase of items for the making of clothes exceeded that of ready-made garments. Ribbons comprised the bulk of the purchases in the haberdashery category. Many different colours and widths were requested and they could be rather expensive. Albeit an exceptional example, the order requested by Robert Goodwin in 1802, at that time the second in command at Albany Fort, illustrates the diverse forms that these ribbons could take:

1. 8 yards of yellow broad ribbon; 2. ½ a piece of yellow narrow ribbon;
3. ½ a piece of blue dark ribbon; 4. ½ a piece of blue sky ribbon; 5. ½ a piece of red ribbon; 6. ¼ a piece of red ribbon; 7. 8 yards green ribbon; 8. 8 yards red ribbon; 9. 8 yards blue sky ribbon; 10. and 11. 4 yards of each kind; 12. is yellow about 12 yards and of red, blue, green [illegible] sky colour of about 10 yards of each kind; 13. 2 yards...¹⁰⁵

At a costly £10 9s. 7d., Goodwin's purchase of the above ribbons was over one-eighth of his annual wage.¹⁰⁶ These ribbons were not for Goodwin himself but, most probably, for his three daughters in Hudson's Bay.¹⁰⁷ The Company's servants also attempted to secure their 'native daughters' futures by finding them a suitable partner from within the Company's workforce, which was another reason why relationships with Aboriginal women declined over the period.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, just as ribbons played a prominent role in practices of courtship in eighteenth-century England, they occupied a similarly important position in the frontier society of Hudson's Bay.¹⁰⁹ The ribbons were often given as gifts to women who either tied them in their hair or attached them to their clothing. Clearly the servants used a tradition that was familiar to them to secure female companionship.

Buttons were another significant article within the haberdashery category and comprised one-fifth of the purchases.¹¹⁰ Whereas the requested ribbons were usually for women, the buttons were most often for men. The buttons were frequently described as being metal, gilt, and plated as Berg has suggested, and were occasionally engraved.¹¹¹ They were purchased in large quantities and were frequently specified as being for

¹⁰⁵ HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Goodwin'; and HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 78.

¹⁰⁶ Goodwin's stated wage in 1800 was £70 with a £10 allowance for a servant. See HBCA, A.30/10, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1800, fo. 6.

¹⁰⁷ HBC Biographical Sheets, 'Robert Goodwin'.

¹⁰⁸ For example, around 1799 Thomas Bunn 'married' Sarah McNab who was the daughter of John McNab, the Chief at Albany House. See Bayley, *Londoner in Rupert's Land*, p. 13. Also see Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, pp. 73-4.

¹⁰⁹ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 315-6.

¹¹⁰ See Table 6.4.

¹¹¹ For instance, see Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 166, 306-7.

waistcoats, coats, and vests. Buttons were fashion items and this is plainly evident in some of the descriptions that were used. In 1810, for instance, the postmaster William Auld requested ‘4 pairs steel polished and studded coat buttons of the price of 2 or 3 shillings each 4 colours of 4 different patterns’.¹¹² John McKay, the master of the inland post of Brandon House, similarly asked for ‘1 gross of coat buttons handsome ones’ and ‘1 gross of waist buttons handsome ones’ in 1804 for which he was charged £2 5s..¹¹³ The purchase of stylish buttons was not solely the preserve of the officer class. In 1807, Humphrey Favell, a servant born in Hudson’s Bay who worked as a labourer for which he was paid £16 per annum, spent £1 2s. on ‘½ gross of fashionable large buttons and ½ gross of fashionable small buttons’.¹¹⁴ Spending on buttons was significant and provided the key finishing touch to the upper part of a gentlemen’s outfit. Indeed, the servants’ purchases of buttons was more than triple the amount spent on buckles. The remaining share of haberdashery purchases were mainly for the pins, needles, thread, string, and thimbles that were essential for making and repairing clothes.

Slightly less was spent on clothing as was spent on haberdashery (Table 6.4). As previously shown, ready-made garments were mainly cottons but there were other items beyond cotton shirts that were acquired.¹¹⁵ Waistcoat pieces, petticoats, shifts, stockings, gartering, boots, shoes, and skates were all features of the servants’ requests. Some of the more decorative items were waistcoat pieces. Servants from Britain and North America asked for designs that were ‘fancy’, ‘handsome’, ‘fine’, and ‘showy’ and it was not only ‘elite’ servants which made these requests.¹¹⁶ Many of the cases are of relatively low-paid servants. George Moore was a canoe-builder who earned £25 each year, and Thomas Isham was a labourer that was only paid a meagre £8 per year.¹¹⁷ Thus despite their low earnings some servants took great pride in owning at least some form of fashionable attire.

¹¹² HBC Biographical Sheets, ‘William Auld’; and HBCA, A.16/113, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1810-97, fo. 2.

¹¹³ HBC Biographical Sheets, ‘John McKay’; and HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 12.

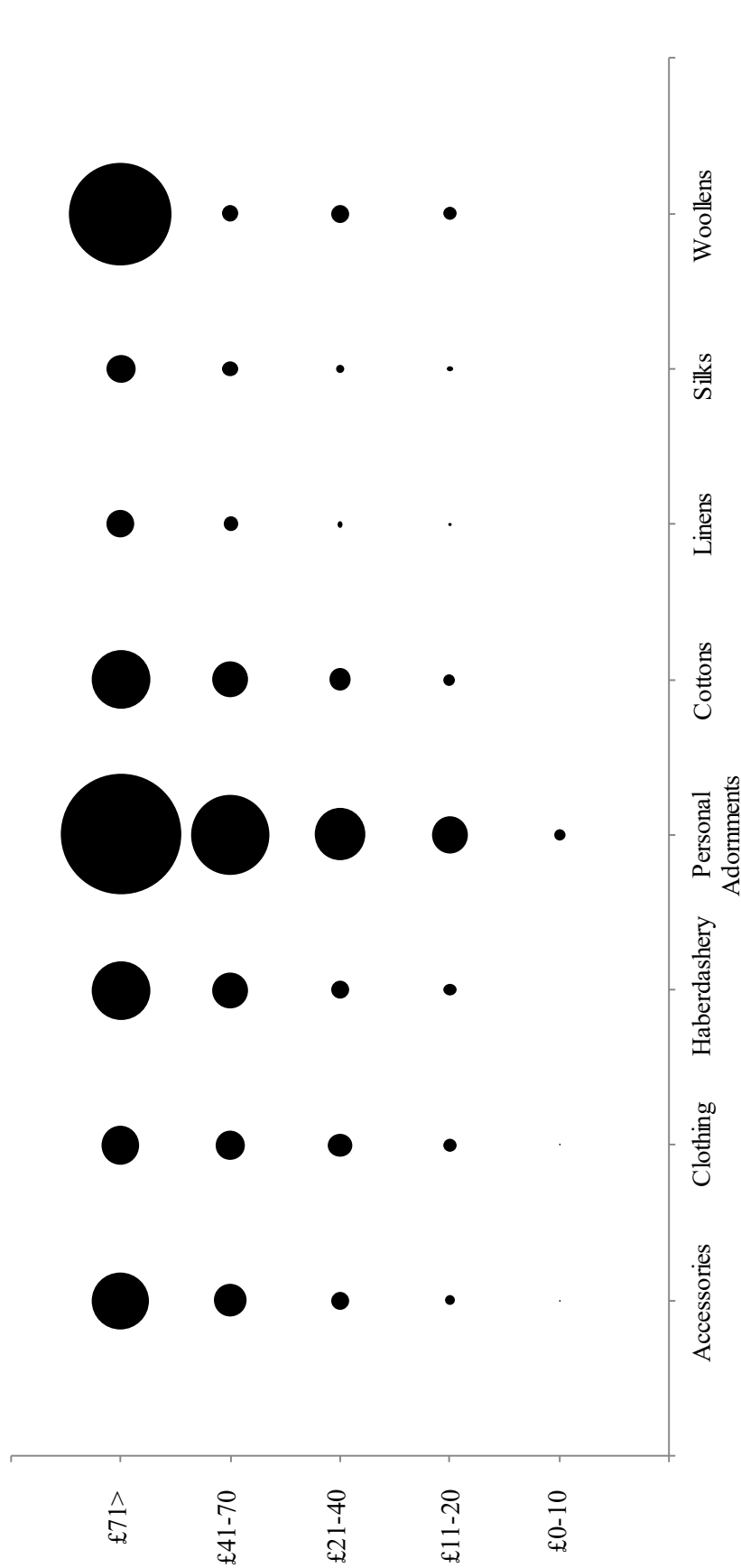
¹¹⁴ HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1802-10, fo. 58. 1812 was the first year in which Humphrey Favell was mentioned in the lists of servants. See A.30/11, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1812, fo. 32.

¹¹⁵ See Table 6.5.

¹¹⁶ HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1802-10, fos. 4, 32, 34, 57.

¹¹⁷ When no wage was clearly discernible the wage rates were reasonably deduced by using information from the first available year and then following the servant’s expected path of advancement. HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1802-10, fos. 32, 34; A.30/12, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1813, fo. 31; and A.32/14, *Servants’ Contracts*, 1806-1807, fo. 39.

Figure 6.8. HBC's British servants' per capita purchases of items of dress by wage, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: The size of the circle indicates the per capita purchases which were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of articles of dress for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1813*; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1815*.

The servants' purchases of accessories were the lowest out of the five categories and accounted for only 10 per cent of the purchases but it was by no means unimportant.¹¹⁸ Most of these purchases were for hats, especially those made out of beaver fur. John Easter — an Inuit employed by the Company — purchased three such hats in quick succession, one in 1807 and another two in 1808, which each cost £1 6s. or about the same price as 5 or 6 cottons shirts.¹¹⁹ Beaver hats were also purchased for the servants' female companions and children, reaffirming the view that women and children did wear such hats. William Auld acquired one 'beaver hat for a woman size with small feathers' and one 'high priced' beaver hat for a girl of 18 years of age in 1811.¹²⁰ The increase in relationships between the Company's servants and indigenous women is clearly expressed in the acquisition of shawls. There were no shawls listed prior to 1800 yet they made up 23 per cent of the spending on accessories between 1801 and 1813.¹²¹ Like the men's waistcoat pieces, the shawls were to be fashionable and were described in terms such as 'fine', 'neat', 'of the Norwich pattern', 'a dark pattern', and 'handsome'.¹²²

Evidently, many of the purchased items of dress were not just made by officers and other well-paid occupations. There are examples of labourers, canoe-men, artisans, and mariners who spent some of their earnings on their attire but a question still remains as to how profuse these purchases were. Using the per capita purchases of the Company's British servants, Figure 6.8 shows that the greatest part of the servants' purchases were assigned to personal adornments. It also indicates that when those on the lowest wages actually spent some of their earnings they choose to spend it on timepieces and their related accessories. Watches, it seems, were cherished and highly desired items, so much so that servants prioritised spending on them over improving their clothes. When the servants did spend money on clothing they were more likely to purchase woollens. This was not the case across all of the income categories as it appears that the 'middling servants' were more inclined to spend money on cottons. The per capita purchases of cottons were £0.77 for those earning between £21 and £40, and £2.19 for those between £41 and £70, whereas the figures for woollens were only £0.51 and £0.46. It seems,

¹¹⁸ See Table 6.4.

¹¹⁹ HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1802-10, fos. 59, 69. Easter was recorded as an 'Esquimaux slave' in the list of servants for Albany in 1785 and it was noted that he was serving for life in the entries for 1794-9. HBCA, A.30/3, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1785-7, fo. 29; and HBCA, A.30/6-9, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay*, 1794-9, fos. 4, 48, 5, 48, 4, 4.

¹²⁰ HBCA, A.16/113, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1810-97, fo. 2.

¹²¹ See Table 6.4.

¹²² HBCA, A.16/111-2, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1810, fos. 72, 12-14, 27, 45.

therefore, that when the middling servants purchased clothing they were more likely, even in the frozen climes of Hudson's Bay, to buy cottons over woollens. In addition, when comparing clothing and haberdashery, Figure 6.8 shows that ready-made garments were more appealing to those on lower incomes. On the other hand, the higher paid servants preferred to allocate more of their spending towards the materials required to make their own outfits.

V. *A Taste of Home*

After dress, items of food and drink were the servants' second highest purchase. The annual shipment of provisions to Hudson's Bay was somewhat precarious and the supplied foodstuffs were not always adequate for the servants' needs.¹²³ Sourcing local supplies of fish, geese, partridges, plover, duck, rabbits, buffalo, venison, and moose, alongside the cultivation of vegetables and the raising of livestock eased the reliance on food imports, although these resources were susceptible to the harsh environmental conditions of Rupert's Land and met with varying degrees of success.¹²⁴ Instances of scurvy were recorded at the Company's posts in the late eighteenth century, something that points towards the ill effects of the scant and monotonous high-protein content of the servant's diet.¹²⁵ In light of this rather bleak portrayal it is perhaps unsurprising that some servants were keen on adding greater variety to their eating and drinking regimes.

While it is an exceptional example, the order made by Goodwin in 1797 indicates some of the culinary delights that some servants were accustomed to and were willing to spend some of their earnings on. The consignment came to the grand total of £19 15s. 3d. and contained: currant jelly (six pots), bohea tea (12 lbs.), green tea (6 lbs.), hyson tea (1 lb.), chocolate (4 lbs.), coffee (4 lbs.), loaf sugar (114 lbs.), moist sugar (112 lbs.), pepper (6 lbs.), pimento (2 lbs.), ginger (2 lbs.), nutmeg ($\frac{1}{4}$ lb.), raisins (4 lbs.), almonds (2 lbs.), and plums (1 box).¹²⁶ Two years later, Goodwin placed another order that brimmed with foodstuffs. This time the package included prunes (28 lbs.), pepper (14 lbs.), ginger (4 lbs.), currants (14 lbs.), sugar candy (6 lbs.), sultanas (28 lbs.), black tea (6 lbs.), green tea (4 lbs.), moist sugar (112 lbs.), nuts (1 bunch), almonds ($\frac{1}{2}$ a bunch), a twelfth night cake seasoned with sweetmeats (also known as a King and Queen cake), and an

¹²³ Rigg, *Men of Spirit*, pp. 67-73.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹²⁶ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 41.

Table 6.7. HBC's servants' purchases of food and drink, 1787-1813 (in £).

	1787-1800	1801-1813	Total
<i>Groceries</i> ^a			
Chocolate	3 (2%)	13 (5%)	17 (4%)
Coffee	4 (2%)	28 (11%)	32 (7%)
Dried Fruits ^b	4 (2%)	3 (1%)	7 (1%)
Spices ^c	3 (2%)	3 (1%)	6 (1%)
Sugar	123 (68%)	128 (48%)	252 (56%)
Tea	42 (23%)	91 (34%)	133 (30%)
Tobacco ^d	3 (1%)	0	3 (1%)
Total	183 (66%)	266 (22%)	449 (31%)
'Grocery' ^e	20 (10%)	573 (68%)	592 (57%)
Total Groceries	202 (73%)	839 (71%)	1,041 (71%)
<i>Other</i> ^a			
Alcohol ^f	29 (39%)	8 (2%)	37 (9%)
Butter	3 (4%)	119 (34%)	122 (29%)
Cheese	0	7 (2%)	7 (2%)
Gingerbread	22 (12%)	98 (37%)	119 (27%)
Grains ^g	0	16 (5%)	16 (4%)
Ham	0	4 (1%)	4 (1%)
Mustard	0	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
Nuts ^h	15 (8%)	54 (20%)	70 (16%)
Peppermint Drops	0	20 (6%)	20 (5%)
Other ⁱ	4 (6%)	19 (6%)	24 (6%)
Total	74 (27%)	347 (29%)	421 (29%)
Overall Total	275	1,186	1,462

Notes:

^a the percentages included alongside each sub-category relate to the overall purchases of the respective category. The percentages stated in the category totals correlate to the overall total;

^b includes currants, figs, plums, prunes, raisons, and sultanas;

^c contains pepper, pimento, nutmeg, and saffron;

^d tobacco was included in food and drink for comparison with other imported plantation produce;

^e after 1800 groceries were increasingly listed under the heading of 'grocery' which never included gingerbread or nuts which is why, despite their foreign origin, these two articles were not included in the grocery category used in this analysis;

^f includes brandy, French brandy, mead, port, and wine;

^g contains flour and oatmeal;

^h consists of almonds, Barcelona nuts, Spanish nuts, and walnuts;

ⁱ primarily includes entries of 'butter and cheese' but also biscuits, cinnamon water, currant jelly, guinea cakes, jam, lemon juice, and Twelfth Night (King and Queen) cakes.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*.

unseasoned twelfth night cake to be sent to his son in Yoxford, Suffolk.¹²⁷ The requests were usually considerably smaller than those made by Goodwin. In 1805, an Orcadian clerk by the name of Alexander Kennedy spent £4 9s. 9d. on loaf sugar (28 lbs.), ‘good’ green tea (4 lbs.), and gingerbread (28 lbs.).¹²⁸ Despite earning twice as much as Kennedy, George Taylor only purchased £2 2s. worth of foodstuffs that same year and this did not include any tea or sugar but consisted of gingerbread (56 lbs.) and nuts (½ bushel).¹²⁹ There was much variation in what the servants purchased, which indicates the individual tastes and preferences of each servant. Tea and sugar were often purchased together but this was not always the case. Some servants requested either black or green tea whereas others ordered both variants in addition to coffee and chocolate. A wide range of spices and dried fruits were sought after by particular servants, while others seemed content with a bag of nuts or some gingerbread cakes. Unlike Goodwin, most servants did not make regular purchases. This suggests that the majority of these purchases were either occasional luxuries or were sourced from elsewhere.

The ‘new’ imported groceries, especially tea and sugar, dominated the servants’ food and drunk purchases. Table 6.7 shows that sugar accounted for over half of the grocery purchases and so it is clear that the servants were inclined towards spending money on sweetening their food and drink. Tea made up almost one-third of the purchases whereas the amount of coffee and chocolate purchased was limited. Tea was clearly the favoured non-alcohol beverage for the Company’s servants. Tea-drinking did not, however, take the expected form. Despite the fact that four-fifths of the tea sold at the EIC’s auctions was black tea, the HBC’s servants seem to have purchased greater quantities of green tea.¹³⁰ Indeed, this was true for both the British and the North American servants. The British servants distributed 56 per cent of their purchases towards green tea whereas the North American servants allocated 69 per cent.¹³¹ Why this is the case is not abundantly clear. The omission of entries where no variety was stated does not

¹²⁷ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1802, fo. 54.

¹²⁸ HBC Biographical Sheets, ‘Alexander Kennedy’; HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1801-10, fo. 28; and HBCA, A.30/10-11, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1800-12, fos. 25, 33.

¹²⁹ HBC Biographical Sheets, ‘George Taylor’; HBCA, A.16/112, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1801-10, fo. 33; HBCA, A.30/10-11, *Names &c of the Company’s Servants at Hudson’s Bay*, 1800-12, fos. 41, 24.

¹³⁰ According to quantities sold by the EIC in 1817. See Hoh-cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui, *The Management of Monopoly: A Study of the East India Company’s Conduct of its Tea Trade, 1784-1833* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), p. 117.

¹³¹ Calculated according to the quantities recorded in the commissions of goods to servants. See HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers’ and Servants’ Account Book — Servants’ Commissions*, 1787-1897.

account for the discrepancy. It is perhaps indicative of a distinctive form of tea consumption in the frontier society of Hudson's Bay. What is certain, however, is that by the late eighteenth century, tea-drinking was not mainly confined to women, as the Company's servants participated in this form of consumption.¹³² Tobacco was, of course, not an item of food and drink but was included for comparative purposes with the other groceries. However, very little tobacco was ordered in the way of requests as the item was part of the trade goods that were offered to Aboriginal traders and so was readily available from the Company's posts in Hudson's Bay. Indeed, the servants' commissions list more snuff boxes than they do rolls of tobacco.

While important, 'groceries' did not account for all of the foodstuffs ordered by the servants. Gingerbread, butter, and nuts were all significant purchases. Indeed, almost as much was spent on gingerbread and butter as was spent on tea. Nuts were usually purchased by the bushel and were largely for almonds and for what was termed 'Barcelona' or 'Spanish' nuts. Alcohol was not as prolific an item as might first be expected; brandy, rum, and other spirituous liquors were readily stocked at the Company's trading posts. While purchases were small for other miscellaneous foodstuffs, they perhaps illustrate the servants' longings for home. Currant jelly, jam, guinea cakes, peppermint drops, and Twelfth Night cakes not only served to break the monotony of the provided rations but could invoke memories of home. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is when Goodwin ordered two Twelfth Night cakes, one for himself in Hudson's Bay and one to be delivered to his son in England.¹³³

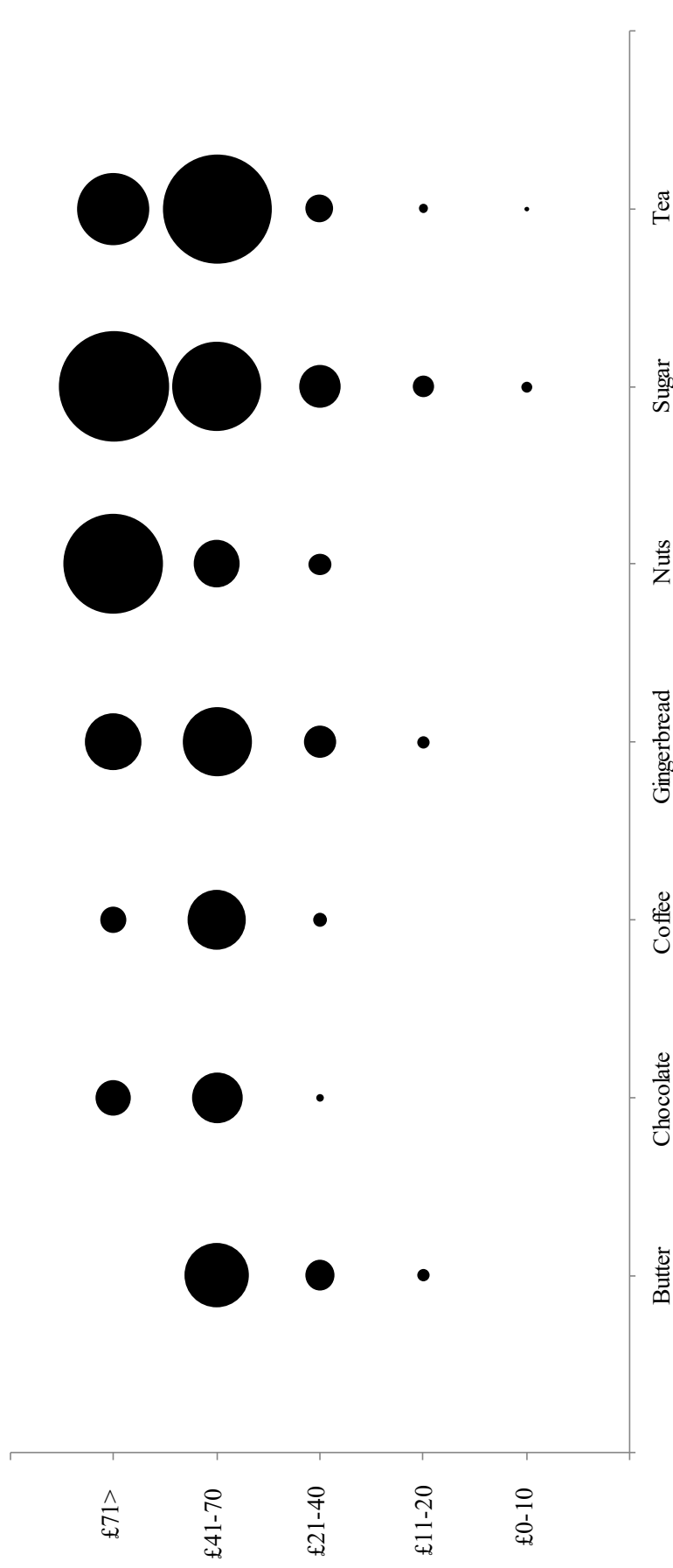
Comparing the British servants' per capita purchases on the principally acquired foodstuffs according to their wage allows for a number of key trends to be identified (Figure 6.9). It is clear that both sugar and tea reached into the purchases of the lowest earners and that most of the servants were inclined towards these two commodities when they placed an order for food and drink. It also shows that gingerbread and butter were next in the priority rankings after sugar and tea. On the other hand, coffee, chocolate, and nuts only appeared in the purchases of those earning above £21 per annum, which reaffirms the view that the consumption of coffee and chocolate was not a major feature of the average British diet.¹³⁴ It is also clear that those in the second-highest wage level were the most prolific purchasers of these articles of food and drink, and their purchases

¹³² This finding reaffirms those of David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby. See Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single Homemaker*, p. 126.

¹³³ HBCA, A.16/111, *Officers' and Servants' Account Book — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1802*, fo. 54.

¹³⁴ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 160.

Figure 6.9. HBC's British servants' per capita purchases of items of food and drink, 1787-1813 (in £).



Notes: The size of the circle indicates the per capita purchases which were calculated by dividing the wage level's total purchases of articles of food and drink for the period 1787-1813 by the total number of British servants at each wage level in the year 1800.

Source: HBCA, A.16/111-13, *Officers' and Servants' Account Books — Servants' Commissions, 1787-1897*; HBCA, A.30/3-13, *Names &c of the Company's Servants at Hudson's Bay, 1785-1813*; and HBCA, A.32/1-18, *Servants' Contracts, 1783-1815*.

routinely surpassed the amount spent by the highest earners. No elite servants purchased butter, probably because the Company included this in its provisioning, and so they, as the highest ranking servants, ensured that they had an adequate amount before allowing other servants a share. The fact that the servants purchased butter at all, especially the middling servants, perhaps shows that the provided rations did not adequately fulfil the servants' desires. While there were some purchases of sugar and tea by the Company's low paid servants, they pale in comparison to those of the middling and elite groups, which cast doubt onto the extent to which sugar and tea were consumed by all parts of British society. Indeed, if sugar and tea were articles of 'mass consumption' by 1750 then one would expect that the per capita purchases of the Company's low-ranking servants to be more extensive. Therefore, it appears that sugar and tea were occasional indulgences for a small proportion of the Company's labourers, canoe-men, and other low-ranking servants. Indeed, it was not until 1853 that tea and sugar became part of the 'ordinary rations' allocated to the Company's servants, which was supposedly due to the increased importance of tea and sugar in the popular diets of the British population.¹³⁵

VI. Conclusion

Detailed analysis of the commodities that the HBC's overseas servants asked the Company to purchase on their behalf offers valuable insights into the material culture of the North-Atlantic World in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The servants' orders were primarily for less durable consumer items such as watches (which needed regular maintenance), textiles, clothing, and non-essential foodstuffs, rather than more durable consumer goods. Most significantly, analysis of these orders shows that all ranks of the Company's servants had a strong interest in ensuring that they had a silver pocket watch while they worked in Hudson's Bay, and that a key reason for the success of these timepieces was their capacity to serve as a 'multi-faceted asset'. Sugar and tea were the principal additional foodstuffs that the servants requested, and there is evidence of the Company's low-paid servants purchasing these articles. However, the limited number of purchases suggests that tea and sugar were only the occasional indulgence of some of the low-ranking servants, while the middling servants seemingly consumed far greater amounts of these two non-essential foodstuffs. Indeed, the way in which the middling servants spent a much higher proportion of their wages than did lower earners,

¹³⁵ Burley, *Servants*, pp. 104-5.

and the fact that these purchases were on a much wider range of goods, does suggest that it was the ‘middling sorts’ who were largely behind the adoption of the new material goods that transformed peoples’ dress, diets, and homes during the eighteenth century.

The Company fulfilled its servants’ orders in an attempt to keep its workforce loyal to the Company. This view is further supported by the fact that for most of the period the Company offered free shipping on all of the packages that it delivered to Hudson’s Bay, whether such goods were purchased by the Company or had been sent from the servants’ friends and family. This ‘indulgence’ came to an end in 1821, and coincided with the split that had formed between the NWC’s agents and wintering partners. Unlike in the case of EIC, the HBC essentially provided its servants with financial services through their control of the remittance system, and this, together with the small size of the British community in Hudson’s Bay and the remoteness of this environment, did not allow for an organised ‘private trade’ to rise up and eventually challenge the Company’s Charter.

Conclusion

Little attention has been paid to the emergence of monopoly in the British fur trade despite the insight it affords to our understanding of the political economy of the British Empire in the early nineteenth century. Historians have offered a number of reasons as to why the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies merged in 1821, yet all of these arguments fall short of constructing the multi-causal explanation required to comprehend fully how this circumstance came about and to situate this development within the wider context of British imperial history. This thesis has broadened the scope of fur trade historiography to include neglected parts of the commodity trade and has located the findings from these new explorations into conceptions of commerce and consumerism in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Atlantic World. In so doing, the thesis has argued that the structure and organisation of the British fur trade encouraged the formation of monopoly and supported the continuation of the London mercantilist system.

This is not to say that other historians were wrong. As Innis and Rich argued, the geography of North America did provide the HBC with a shorter, more cost-effective route into the interior over the protracted route available to the NWC. The NWC's internal structure, as Campbell correctly argued, left the Company open to splits between the wintering partners and Montreal agents, a division that was exploited by the HBC. And, as noted by Carlos, the HBC's access to credit from the Bank of England afforded it with a greater capacity to weather the severe financial difficulties that arose during the Napoleonic Wars. To these reasons can be added the disruptive impact that the War of 1812, the Red River Settlement, and the actions of the Earl of Selkirk had on the NWC's operations, as well as the fact that Selkirk and Wedderburn were able to acquire a large share of the HBC's stock.

All of these factors played a role in the merger of the two companies in 1821, but the problem with the extant literature is that it is too focused on the union. The 1821 settlement was more than a business merger. This was the moment when a single company did not just *acquire* a monopoly of the British fur trade, rather it was *granted* one by the British government. This goes against the accepted view that chartered companies were in full retreat by the early nineteenth century, especially in Britain. The

Royal African Company, Russia Company, and Levant Company had all seen their privileges withdrawn or reduced during the eighteenth century. A mere eight years before, the EIC had lost its monopoly of the India trade and looked set to (and would) lose its monopoly of the China trade in 1833. The dismantling of these chartered companies and their exclusive privileges opened up Britain's overseas trade to all British subjects, and was one of the first stages in the liberalisation of British overseas trade. The fur trade did not conform to this broad historical pattern. The British conquest of Canada in 1763 opened the Montreal fur trade to all British subjects. This 'free trade' era did not last. Within 20 years the NWC had emerged and it rapidly became the rising star of the Montreal fur trade. By 1804, the NWC had eliminated or absorbed any opposition so that it commanded the bounty of furs flowing down the St. Lawrence River. Duopoly soon became monopoly as the HBC pacified the NWC and had its future dominance secured through the bestowal of a royal license that granted the Company the exclusive right to the fur trade of the Rocky Mountains and Pacific North-West Coast. In 1821, therefore, the British legislature acted to strengthen the position of a chartered company at time when the global influence of such institutions was in decline. This intervention was carefully enacted so as to circumvent the political difficulty that routinely surfaced whenever Parliament was asked to confer such exclusive trading privileges.

The long-term drift towards monopoly in the fur trade makes clear that there were underlying aspects of the trade that promoted its emergence. These included environmental factors, issues over imperial security, the absence of political opposition, and the economic structure of the trade itself. Intense competition in the trade brought about the depletion of the fur-bearing animals upon which the trade ultimately depended, particularly the beaver population, and propelled the westward expansion of the trade. Edward Ellice argued forcibly to the Select Committee in 1857 that open competition had ruined the fur trade. This would have been a striking conclusion to have drawn in the early nineteenth century. Understanding of ecological issues in Western thought was very much in its infancy and industrial capitalism was in the ascendency. This was an admission that when the 'free market' was combined with the fur trade it did not bring about economic prosperity. In conjunction with environmental degradation was the stability of Britain's empire in North America. Through its weaving of a complex tapestry of ties with Aboriginal peoples, the fur trade was always a double-edged sword of imperialism. On the one hand, the fur trade fostered goodwill between Aboriginal peoples and imperial powers; it enabled the former to access new material goods that — on the

whole — raised their standard of living, and it allowed the latter to extract wealth from remote regions that lay beyond the scope of settled empire. On the other hand, the overzealous extraction of this wealth alongside the introduction of guns made Aboriginal communities increasingly dependent upon western fur traders and rendered a continuation of their traditional way of life nearly impossible. In the late eighteenth century, therefore, the depletion of the animal population in their traditional hunting and trapping grounds led to large-scale migrations of the Chipewyan and Assiniboine peoples southwest towards and beyond Lake Winnipeg. In a region that was experiencing seismic change, the establishment of the Red River Settlement enflamed local tensions and the hostilities that followed the Seven Oaks Massacre threatened the foundation upon which the British controlled the frontiers of empire in North America. As reports of the violence and bloodshed reached Britain, the Colonial Office was alarmed at the rapid deterioration of civil order in the fur trade, not least because the occurrences were in the vicinity of the border with the United States. While Lord Bathurst was slow to act, Ellice understood that the restoration of stability was contingent on a single company controlling the fur trade.

As has been argued by Ogilvie, the central reason why medieval and early-modern European states granted exclusive commercial rights and privileges to merchant guilds and chartered companies was because these organisations solved particular problems encountered by rulers. This hypothesis holds true in the case of the HBC. In the mid-eighteenth-century debate over the HBC's Charter, Parliament concluded that a chartered company was the best way to finance the factories that were the basis of Britain's sovereignty over Hudson's Bay. Rather than financial considerations, in 1821 further concessions were made to the HBC because the Company was viewed as the most effective means through which to regulate the fur trade. The HBC would manage the trade by reducing over-trapping and maintaining good relations with Aboriginal peoples. This in turn ensured the stability of the frontier regions of Britain's empire in North America and limited the northward expansion of the United States. Indeed, it should be remembered that the fur trade and the HBC were as much tools of imperialism as they were economic concerns and that the persistence of the HBC owes much to its ability to resolve the question of how the British imperial state should govern the vast wilds of North America.

The other central factor that allowed the HBC to acquire a monopoly of the British fur trade was the absence of domestic forces within Britain that were hostile to the

emergence of monopoly. These aspects were closely tied to the organisation of the trade. For British manufacturers, there was already a degree of competition in the fur trade between the HBC and the London Houses that supplied the NWC, and the limited potential for growth in the trade further curtailed their demands for trade reform. As regards the firms whose trade depended upon the supply of furs from North America, there was no real motive for them to resist the Company's rise to prominence. Monopolies, of course, often lead to higher prices so it would be thought that British furriers and hat manufacturers would have opposed the HBC-NWC union and Parliament's intervention. Both of these groups were certainly willing to lobby the legislature when it came to advancing the interests of their trade, and the hatting industry was particularly adept at influencing commercial policy. In fact, considering that hat manufacturers were rather sensitive to the prices of their raw materials, it is probable that they concluded that a stable price and volume of beaver was preferable over the uncertainty created by open competition. The distribution and organisation of production was similarly important. In the case of the furriers, the production of fine fur garments and accessories was confined to the metropolis, and while provincial hat manufacturers did produce a significant number of beaver hats the relationship they had with their London counterparts was largely cooperative. Unlike in the case of tea or cotton garments, fur-related apparel was not an article of mass consumption. The outports, therefore, had little to gain from seeking to acquire a share of the nation's fur imports and there was little chance that such attempts would have been successful. Indeed, the NWC was at greater liberty to ship its furs to any British port and yet the Company chose to confine its imports to London's docks. Provincial retailers were content to have the metropolitan economy supply their fine fur garments, and hat manufacturers were satisfied with sourcing their beaver skins from the London market.

The absence of domestic opposition to the rise of monopoly in the British fur trade reaffirms the view that the presence of such forces during the debate over the EIC's Charter in 1811-3 played an important role in ending the Company's monopoly of the India trade. In the case of the fur trade, the lack of these dissenting voices enabled Cain and Hopkin's 'gentlemanly capitalists' to shape and guide the formation of imperial policy; in this case ensuring that the HBC would prevail over the fur trade. Crucially, Ellice was not only the architect of the 1821 Act and the driving force behind the merger of the two companies, he was actively sought out by Bathurst to resolve the crisis in the fur trade. This is a clear example of the gentlemanly capitalist thesis in action, and does

much to explain how it was possible for the HBC to have its position strengthened while other chartered companies were in retreat. In essence, the structure and special attributes of the fur trade promoted the emergence of monopoly and allowed a chartered company to persist long after the prevailing orthodoxy had concluded that these institutions limited the growth of British overseas trade.

While this study has broken new ground by exploring neglected parts of the fur trade, it has also unearthed new questions which warrant further research. It is known that Ellice and his family had extensive interests in the West India trade and owned several plantations in the British Caribbean. Did the troubles in the British West Indian economy in the early nineteenth century drive Ellice to strengthen his involvement in the fur trade? The networks and activities of the HBC's shareholders and committee members is another area of study where further research would be most useful. Little is known about the individuals who brokered the HBC's relationship with the Bank of England or the private financiers who also extended credit to the Company. Did these financiers play a hitherto hidden role in the merger of the two companies? In addition, the thesis has shown that a detailed analysis of the HBC's post account books is needed for a fuller understanding of the consumption habits of the Company's overseas servants, an undertaking that would shed further light on everyday life in these isolated communities and — since all of the Company's servants were men — would help to further address the disproportionate focus on women in eighteenth-century studies of material culture. While sources are scarce, a more thorough comparison of the Canada merchants' relationship with British manufacturers and Aboriginal peoples' responses to their trading goods with that of the HBC would greatly contribute towards debates over the efficiency of chartered companies in overseas trade. Finally, one of the untold stories of this period is the rise of the British sealskin trade. A study of this commodity trade could add much to our understanding of Britain's maritime empire.

This thesis has shown that the merger between the HBC and NWC in 1821, and the Parliamentary Act passed to regulate the fur trade of that same year should be accorded greater significance within imperial and economic history. Only a multi-causal explanation can account for why the British fur trade ended up as a more robust model of the mercantilist system in 1821 than was the case in 1783. The study has reaffirmed Ogilvie's argument that institutions with exclusive commercial privileges endured for so long because of the advantages they offered to the rulers of early modern states, and has endorsed aspects of Cain and Hopkins' 'gentlemanly capitalists' thesis of British imperial

expansion. It has also identified the special attributes of the fur trade that explains why the historical development of this commodity trade diverged from the evolution of other trades. The ‘old colonial system’ would live on in the fur trade until the HBC ‘surrendered’ its rights to the Dominion of Canada in 1870. It was, therefore, not Free Trade that swept away the HBC’s Charter and monopoly in the fur trade but rather the booming settler empire. By the mid-nineteenth century the HBC was no longer viewed as the defender of empire in North America but as an impediment to its prosperity. At the 1857 Parliamentary Committee on its affairs it was not the Company’s commercial acumen that was in question but its capacity to advance white settlement, ‘civilise’ Aboriginal peoples, and develop the territory under its control. If the Committee members present were rather bemused at the reasons presented by Ellice for the maintenance of the HBC’s Charter in 1821, it was because decades of industrialisation had transformed the Atlantic World into a very different place. With the advent of industrial capitalism, the railroad steamed towards the British North American wilderness and the impending rise of the fur farm heralded a new area of the fur trade. Ellice’s handiwork brought almost half a century of stability to the HBC’s domain but British imperialism, as pragmatic as ever, eventually vowed that it was time to shed its fur coat and the anachronistic institution that came with it. Yet as the empire and the world of commerce and consumers moved on, the Company would transform itself into the chain of department stores that still stand on the streets of Canada to this day, and whose interests, with its recent move into the German and Netherlands retail markets, once again spans the Atlantic.¹

¹ *The Financial Times*, ‘Hudson’s Bay Company launches Netherlands push’, 17 May 2016.

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