



FIFTY HISTORICAL VIGNETTES

Views of the Common People
Don McLean

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of Native Studies and Applied Research

the 1990s, the number of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia has increased in the United Kingdom (1.5 million in 1990 to 2.2 million in 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. The United Kingdom has a long history of psychiatric care, but in the 1950s and 1960s, the focus of care shifted from institutional care to community care. This was a response to the realization that institutional care was often ineffective and costly. The development of the community mental health team (CMHT) was a key step in this process. CMHTs are multidisciplinary teams that provide a range of services to people with mental health problems, including assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. They are based in the community and aim to provide a more holistic and person-centred approach to care.

One of the key challenges for CMHTs is to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of a diverse population. This includes people from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and languages. It also includes people with different levels of mental health problems and different needs. CMHTs need to be able to provide a range of services that are tailored to the needs of each individual. This includes providing a range of treatments, including medication, psychotherapy, and social skills training. It also includes providing a range of support services, including housing, employment, and education.

One of the key areas of research in CMHTs is the development of new treatments and interventions. This includes the development of new medications, new forms of psychotherapy, and new social skills training programmes. It also includes the development of new ways of organizing CMHTs and new ways of working with people with mental health problems. This research is essential for ensuring that CMHTs are able to provide the best possible care to people with mental health problems.

Another key area of research is the development of new ways of assessing and diagnosing mental health problems. This includes the development of new diagnostic tools and new ways of assessing the severity of mental health problems. It also includes the development of new ways of understanding the underlying causes of mental health problems. This research is essential for ensuring that CMHTs are able to provide a more accurate and effective diagnosis and treatment for people with mental health problems.

Finally, a key area of research is the development of new ways of preventing mental health problems. This includes the development of new ways of identifying people at risk of developing mental health problems and new ways of providing them with support and intervention. It also includes the development of new ways of promoting mental health and well-being in the community. This research is essential for ensuring that CMHTs are able to prevent mental health problems and improve the lives of people with mental health problems.

In conclusion, the development of the community mental health team (CMHT) has been a key step in the evolution of mental health care in the United Kingdom. CMHTs provide a more holistic and person-centred approach to care and are essential for ensuring that people with mental health problems receive the best possible care. Research in CMHTs is essential for ensuring that they are able to meet the needs of a diverse population and provide a range of services that are tailored to the needs of each individual.

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THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY: A CHARTERED COMPANY CLAIMS A CONTINENT

HISTORY, as it has been recorded from the perspective of the European colonizers around the world, is, perhaps understandably, a biased, one-dimensional account of events. No one, save for the indigenous North Americans, has ever referred to the colonization process in America as the Invasion of North America, but that is precisely what it was.

The invasion of North America was not universally a military invasion, however. Although Spain's conquest of South and Central America was carried out with cruel and unremitting military force, both Great Britain and France tended to colonize North America, at least initially, when the balance of power favoured the Natives, through economic means. But the goals were the same for all three European powers. They wanted control over the resources and the people of the New World.

The European powers involved in the conquest of the New World from 1492 onward mobilized and streamlined all of their existing institutions in order to justify, coordinate and expedite this most profitable conquest. The religious institutions legitimized the conquest of South and Central America through a series of Papal Bulls – infallible directives delivered by the Pope to the rulers of Spain and Portugal. In 1493, one year after the Columbus voyage, Pope Alexander VI granted to the rulers of Spain all the world not already possessed by Christian states so that the unfortunate heathen who had not been introduced to the one true faith could “embrace the Catholic faith

and be trained in good morals." The Pope characterized the Papal Bull of 1493 as "Our exhortation, requisition, gift, grant, assignment, investiture, deed, constitution, deputation, mandate, inhibition, indult, extension, enlargement, will and decree." Violators of his plan for the colonization of the world were threatened with "the wrath of Almighty God" as well as – rather anticlimactically – "the additional wrath of Saints Peter and Paul."

Although the Pope tended to cover all ideological bases in order to justify the conquest of foreign lands, the English monarchs involved in the same process were far less subtle. Henry VII of England, himself an orthodox Catholic, avoided the question of morals entirely. In 1496 he simply ordered John Cabot to "conquer, occupy and possess the lands of heathens and infidels." His frequently expressed motive was simply to acquire the "nomination, title and jurisdiction of the same."

Whether colonization was justified through religious or secular means, the task of establishing colonies around the world was new and difficult. The process of colonization was found to pose immense problems of logistics that strained the capacity of both the military and the commercial institutions of the participating European states.

The Dutch solved these problems by turning their merchant companies into miniature nation-states. The Dutch East India Company, organized in 1602, became the model for the successful European colonization process. The Dutch East India Company, granted a monopoly of trade with the Far East, maintained its own army and navy and had the right to wage war, make peace, make treaties with foreign nations in its own name, to conquer and acquire foreign territories, and to rule these territories in its own name. The company possessed one hundred and fifty trading ships, forty war vessels, and had a permanent army of ten thousand company soldiers.

The British and French Chartered Companies engaged in the fur trade throughout the 17th and 18th centuries maintained the state-like characteristics of the Dutch East India

Company. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was formed in 1670 when Charles II, King of England, granted a charter to his cousin Prince Rupert and seventeen other noblemen and merchants. The Charter presumed to give them a trading monopoly over a vast but ill-defined region of North America consisting of all the lands watered by streams flowing into Hudson Bay. Under the Charter, the Hudson's Bay Company was empowered to establish laws in its territory (known as Rupert's Land), to impose penalties for the infraction of its laws, to erect forts, to maintain ships of war and to make war or peace with the natives.

The Hudson's Bay Company's method of colonization was peaceful, but not necessarily benign. An incredible fortune in furs could be earned through trade with the Indians in the Hudson and James Bay regions, and there was no need to resort to armed aggression. As trade prospered, trading posts or *forts* sprang up along the shores of the desolate northern bays. Moose Factory, built in 1672, Albany (1678) and Eastmain (1718) ringed James Bay, while Fort Nelson (1684) Fort Severin (1685) and Fort Churchill (1717) served the western shore of Hudson Bay. For a hundred years the company remained on these northern shores, earning phenomenal profits. In this quiet way, the European conquest of what is now Canada began on a solid economic footing.



*Girl (Tekahionwake) in buckskin dress and string of beads.
Participant in Lebret Historic Pageant, 1928.*

Photo Credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.



VOYAGERS AND INDIAN MAIDENS: THE FUR TRADE CREATES A NEW PEOPLE

THE LONDON DIRECTORS of the HBC's trading empire in Rupert's Land were aghast at the possibility that their servants in the colony might become enamoured with the Native women with whom they came in contact. As a result of their fears, rules were laid down forbidding the Company's servants to dally with the young women who came with their relatives on the annual trip to trade furs for commodities at the Company's forts.

The directors' orders, posted throughout the Company's string of forts around the northern bays, threatened to punish any servant who engaged in a love affair with an Indian woman. The posted order proclaimed:

Rule 1: All persons to attend prayers.

Rule 2: All persons to live lovingly with one another, not to swear or quarrel but to live peaceably without drunkenness or profaneness.

Rule 3: No man to meddle, trade with or affront any Indians, nor to concern themselves with women. Men going contrary to this order are to be punished [in public] before Indians.

But these cold rules could not be successfully transplanted to the desolate shores of the Hudson Bay region. Such a cold climate demanded warm human relationships, and within a few brief years both the servants and the officers of the HBC were eagerly taking Native wives. By 1763, when France ceded its territories in North America to England under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, the majority of the HBC's employees

in Rupert's Land were of "mixed blood."

This new class of people, "Halfbreeds" as they were called, provided an unexpected boost to the Company's commercial operations in Rupert's Land. Bilingual and bicultural, they became the near-perfect middlemen of the fur trade, expanding the Company's trading empire as they created new trade alliances between the Company and bands of Northern Cree. Furthermore, the men were a made-to-order workforce for the fur trade which rapidly replaced the indentured servants who previously had to be brought all the way from Europe. These Halfbreed people acquired within their family structure both the European and Indian skills necessary for the fur trade. Good hunters, at home in the forest or in the fort, they were expert canoemen as well.

As an added bonus to the Company, the Indian wives of Company men had many skills that proved essential once the Company's operations began to expand to the interior of the continent. In fact the fur trade in the interior could not have been successfully carried out without the Company's acquisition of the traditional skills of the Indian women. The Native wives made pemmican, a mixture of smoked meat and wild berries. Pemmican was such a nutritious food staple that voyagers could live on it for months at a time without any other food supplement. The women also made snowshoes, without which overland trips would have been impossible during the winter months when furs were at their prime. Indian women made and repaired canoes, which were, of course, vital to the fur trade.

When Canadian merchants from Montreal took over the fur trading route abandoned by the French after 1763, they forced the HBC to expand its operations into the continent's interior in order to meet the new competition. These merchants, who soon amalgamated into a large local monopoly known as the North West Company, used the St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, Rainy River system that connected Montreal to the West. This route consisted of thousands of miles of rivers and lakes stretching from the stately maple forests of Quebec and Ontario

through the majestic desolation of rock and pine known as the Great Canadian Shield to the open immensity of the Canadian prairies. Beyond the seas of grass, alive with immense herds of buffalo, other waterways led to the incredibly rich fur-producing regions along the Mackenzie and Coppermine Rivers, whose poplar-lined shores wound north to the open tundra and beyond to the frozen shores of the Beaufort Sea.

Over these splendid waterways came hundreds of the most adventurous sons of the Quebec Habitants. Unlike their Hudson's Bay Company counterparts, they were sons of the Canadian soil, at home in the woods and on the rivers – and far less amenable to company discipline than their foreign-born counterparts in the HBC. These "Nor'Westers" took Native brides without facing questions of foreign morality. They married for love and passion and for all the same trade-related reasons as the Hudson's Bay Company men. But they were more prolific, with many voyageurs taking more than one wife, as was the custom of the Natives. The children of these unions, like their fathers, became employees of the North West Company. They were known as "les Metis," a name that has passed the test of time.

Today, all Canadians of Indian and European descent proudly call themselves Metis. They are the descendants of the early adventurers who first made their way across the vastness of this continent. They marked the beginning of the end for the ancient Indian cultures. And they planted the seeds of a new social order, the value of which is still to be determined.



THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND THE NORTH WEST COMPANY: A WAR OF THE CORPORATIONS

FROM THE BEGINNING of the seventeenth century through to the late nineteenth century, chartered companies – the equivalent of modern multinational corporations – assumed unto themselves state-like powers that were used to enhance the colonization process. In fact, these companies often waged war on the people whose territories they sought to possess and, rather less frequently, they waged war on each other. Such a war occurred in Canada between the years 1790 and 1821. It was fought by a Canadian firm, the North West Company, with headquarters in Montreal, and the Hudson's Bay Company, a British firm with headquarters in London.

The Hudson's Bay Charter of 1670 had granted absolute control over Rupert's Land to the British firm, but after the defeat of the French in North America in 1763, Canadian merchants in Montreal began looking hungrily at the rich profits being earned through the fur trade. The St. Lawrence-Great Lakes Waterways leading inland to the richest fur-producing regions in the world were just too tempting, and by 1783 a series of small Montreal companies merged to form a large and economically powerful regional monopoly, capable of competing with the Hudson's Bay Company on something like equal terms.

The North West Company (NWC) developed a sophisticated marketing system. By 1790 the company's furs were being shipped to China from ports in the United States of America, while tea and other Chinese products were traded to England and other European nations. By 1803 the North West Company had a small fleet of ships ranging in size from 12 tons

to well over 60 tons sailing on the Great Lakes. Canoes were manufactured at Three Rivers and at Fort Michilimackinac on the Great Lakes.

The North West Company represented a powerful consortium of Canadian, American and British capital, and its aggressive policies soon cut deeply into Hudson's Bay Company profits from the fur trade. From the beginning, the North West Company's westward expansion was dramatic. By 1778, the Nor'Wester Peter Pond reached the Athabasca River and crossed the height of land where waters ran north to the Arctic Ocean. By 1793 another Nor'Wester, Alexander Mackenzie, had taken the dangerous waterways through the three Canadian mountain barriers all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

The Hudson's Bay Company was slow to react to the North West Company's initiatives. But the London directors decided that until such time as the upstart colonial company could be dealt with either legally or militarily, the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to compete by expanding its own operations westward. The resulting competition sent the two companies into a panic of westward expansion, leapfrogging over one another in an effort to secure trade in all the profitable regions of the West. This created major internal changes for the Hudson's Bay Company. Westward expansion soon required a greatly expanded labour force, since the Company now had to travel to the fur-gathering Indian bands instead of waiting for them to make the journey to the Company's forts in the Bay region.

As competition increased, profits dropped off sharply for both companies. In fact, the Hudson's Bay Company did not pay any dividends to its shareholders between 1809 and 1814. The profit picture was just as glum for the North West Company, who escalated the economic competition into the realm of military action. John Haldane of the North West Company initiated a series of attacks on the Hudson's Bay Company posts at Bad Lake and Red Lake in Minnesota in an attempt to block the Company's Albany route. The Hudson's Bay Company's post at Big Falls, near Lake Winnipeg, was

also attacked. In 1808, John Campbell of the North West Company organized an attack on the HBC post at Reindeer Lake.

The war of the corporations automatically involved the employees of the two companies, thus exacerbating the traditional tensions that existed between the French-Catholic employees of the NWC and the English-Protestant employees of the HBC. The North West Company was manned by Quebecois voyageurs and French-speaking, staunchly Catholic Metis, while the Hudson's Bay Company was served predominantly by Halfbreeds, Protestant and English-speaking like their Scots and English officers and co-workers.

The North West Company's transportation infrastructure bisected that of the Hudson's Bay Company at the settlement of Red River (the present site of Winnipeg, Manitoba). At the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, the North West Company had built Fort Gibraltar. This well-manned and well-armed fort stood guard over the most vital region in the North West. For it was here at the juncture of these two rivers that the key to the waterways of the entire northwestern fur trading region was to be found. And it was here under the guns of Fort Gibraltar that Lord Selkirk set up a colony of farmers, people brought over from the Highlands of Scotland in 1812. They were used by Lord Selkirk to lay claim to the land overlooking the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

For years prior to the arrival of the Selkirk settlers, the NWC's officers had been agitating among the Metis employees, inciting them to take up arms against the HBC. Consequently, a militant sense of nationalism had been developed among the French-speaking Metis. Among these Metis, settlement was regarded with both fear and scorn. Into this tinder box of tension and intrigue, Lord Selkirk brought several families of Scots immigrants, twenty-three people in all. They were, in effect, little more than cannon fodder, soon to be sacrificed in a war of corporations.



CUTHBERT GRANT: FIRST LEADER OF THE METIS

NOT MUCH IS RECORDED about Cuthbert Grant in mainstream Canadian history books, yet he is the man who must be credited as the founder of the Metis nation in the West.

Like the people he ruled and loved, Cuthbert Grant was a complicated individual. He was a man of nearly incompatible racial and cultural contradictions. And yet, these same contradictory characteristics created within him a fierce dynamism and an unconquerable energy. A mixture of Indian hunter and British aristocrat, Grant was largely responsible for the direction taken during the opening chapter of the story of the Metis.

Cuthbert Grant, the son of a prominent Nor'Wester by the same name, was born in 1793 at Fort Tremblante, on the east side of the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, in what is now Winnipeg, Manitoba. Little is known of his mother. She was the daughter of a Cree woman and a White trader from the Qu'Appelle region of Saskatchewan. Cuthbert's father was a member of the clan Grant – the Grants of Strathspey, county Inverness, Scotland. From this region of Scotland came many of the future fur-trading barons of Canada, among them John Stuart, and Donald A. Smith – known as Lord Strathcona – the man who was instrumental in the financing and the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

During one of his fur-trading expeditions to the North West, Grant's father died of an unknown illness and was buried at Cumberland House in 1799, leaving Cuthbert, his older brother James, and three sisters, Margaret, Josephte, and Mary. Upon



*Cuthbert Grant, First Metis Leader, 1796-1854.
Photo Credit: Public Archives Canada*

the death of Cuthbert Grant Senior, young Cuthbert and James were made the proteges of William McGillivray of the North West Company in Montreal. McGillivray was the most powerful man in the fur trade, and was a family friend of long standing. The children moved to Montreal in 1801, and Cuthbert and James were placed under the control of another fur magnate, John Stuart, a cousin of Donald A. Smith. Stuart, carrying out the directions left in the will of the late Cuthbert Grant, had the boys baptized in the Presbyterian Church. They were then sent back to Scotland to be educated in the manner of the British Aristocracy. James remained in Scotland but Cuthbert returned to Montreal when he was sixteen years old.

In 1812, Cuthbert was set up as a clerk of the North West Company, and was appointed to a position in the Red River district. When he made the long journey back to the Red River of his childhood, he did so in luxury. Travelling by canoe, as was the custom of the "bourgeois" of the fur trade, Grant was wearing his frock coat, beaver hat, breeches and polished boots. He took with him all the luxuries that a man of his station required: robe, tent, travelling desk, preserved foods and good wines.

He was welcomed back by both his mother's people and the "bourgeois" of the North West Company. His first position was that of factor for a small trading operation on the Qu'Appelle River, but he was obviously destined for much better things; he was seen by the North West Company officials as the man who could train and develop a Metis military force capable of driving the HBC out of the West.

Grant was given the task of keeping an eye on the Selkirk settlers at the vital forks of the Red River, so he spent much of his time at the North West Company's Fort Gibraltar. This fort guarded the gateway to all the western trading regions from the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

Halfway between his trading station on the Qu'Appelle River and Fort Gibraltar lay a Hudson's Bay Company post, Fort Brandon (now Brandon, Manitoba). This post was supervised by young John McKay, a tall athletic man, similar in stature

to Cuthbert Grant. John McKay was accompanied at Fort Brandon by his sister, Elizabeth. Although McKay was working for the hated Hudson's Bay Company, he and Cuthbert soon became fast friends. Later, when Grant was transferred to a post just within rifle shot of Fort Brandon, the friendship developed into a lasting companionship. John McKay and Cuthbert spent many hours engaged in wrestling and sword-play, the martial arts of the Highlands Scots. Cuthbert soon fell in love with Elizabeth, who returned his love, and a passionate affair developed, ending in the only kind of marriage possible in a land without clergy, a *mariage du pays*.

Grant's physical prowess and the swiftness of his actions quickly earned him the respect of the Metis in his command and of the Indians, who named him Wappeton, meaning the white ermine. A renowned hunter, horseman, and warrior, Grant was recognized as the leader of the Metis buffalo hunters. During the fur trade war that followed in 1814, Grant was to become infamous as the man responsible for the deaths of the settlers at Seven Oaks. Throughout this brief but rancorous fur trade war, Cuthbert Grant and John McKay remained staunch friends. Elizabeth McKay had Cuthbert's child, but they were eventually separated as a result of the war and the animosity it created.

Cuthbert Grant went on to fame as the founder of Grantown (Now Saint Francois-Xavier), a small village a few miles west of Winnipeg. He went on to become the Hudson's Bay Company's Warden of the Plains after the merger of 1821, and, later, was appointed to the Council of Assiniboia, the HBC's governing body in Rupert's Land. In the late 1860s, Grant lost his position of power and prestige among the Metis to a radical Metis politician, Jean Louis Riel, father of the famous Louis Riel. Grant's loyalty to the HBC during the free trade struggles of the 1840s made him unpopular with the Metis, and he drifted into political obscurity. A wealthy but lonely man, Grant died in 1854 at the age of 61.



ISABEL GUNN OF THE ORKNEYS

THE ORKNEY ISLANDS, situated a few miles off the northern coast of Scotland, are among the bleakest islands in the world. The North Sea, dark and foreboding even in its passive moods, rages and howls during its harsh winter storms. The islands, consisting of rocky outcroppings and wild tracts of heather-laden, almost barren soil, seldom see the sun. Rain and fog prevail through all the seasons. Small wonder that fewer than thirty of the islands in this inhospitable chain are inhabited by humans. The inhabitants, mainly of Norse origin, are as tough and uncompromising as their harsh sea environment. There are only two towns in the Orkney Islands: Kirkwall, the capital, and Stromness, both on the Isle of Pomona.

During the 19th century, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) executive in London favoured the Orkneymen as servants for their fur trading empire in Rupert's Land. Orkneymen, accustomed to hardship and a cold climate, felt at home on the barren coasts of Hudson Bay and James Bay. Indeed, many Orkneymen preferred the climate in Rupert's Land to that of the Orkneys. Orkneymen were "steady" employees whose stoic demeanor and staunch Protestant work ethic made them an ideal workforce for the fur trade. This was in marked contrast to their neighbours, the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders who also served the HBC. The temperamental pride and stubborn disposition of the Highlanders often drove their HBC officers to distraction.

The first woman to work for the HBC as a regular servant

of the fur trade in Rupert's Land was Isabel Gunn of the Orkneys. She had not been hired as a women employee, however; she had masqueraded as a man in order to get the job.

Isabel Gunn was a Highlander whose parents had moved to the Orkney Islands from Sutherland on the bleak and desolate north coast of Scotland. Clan Gunn consisted of the warlike descendants of Viking raiders who had settled the region centuries before. The clan had suffered many military defeats over the centuries, but it endured as a clan into the 19th century. The clan name gives a clue to the characteristics of its people: Gunn is derived from the Norse word *gunnr*, meaning war.

1805 was not a singularly impressive year in the history of the Orkney Islands, but it was the year that Isabel Gunn, then a teen-aged girl, fell in love with a young fisherman from Stromness, William Fubbister. Isabel, though not a striking beauty, was a tall, slim, attractive girl with sharp blue eyes and long, copper coloured hair. Unlike the majority of the Orkney women, who were inclined to be passive and uncomplaining, Isabel was aggressive and outspoken. Isabel Gunn knew what she wanted in life and would settle for nothing less. She wanted to marry the soft-spoken, gentle-natured man named William Fubbister – and she did not intend to wait forever to do it.

William Fubbister, in his early twenties, was enthralled with the energetic red-headed tomboy named Isabel Gunn. He returned her devotion, though not with the same intensity nor the same sense of urgency that she felt. Fubbister would marry her, but he would be reasonable and rational about it. Marriage required money. She would have to wait until he could earn enough to support a wife and family. As was the custom of young Orkneymen, Fubbister would serve a seven-year term with the HBC in Rupert's Land, then return and marry.

William Fubbister was accepted and was duly signed on for a seven-year term with the company. He was to be stationed at one of the company's wilderness forts in Rupert's Land.

When William reported this news to Isabel she did not become elated as he had expected. Instead, she broke into a furious tirade of abuse. She would not wait seven years to be loved. She wanted marriage and a family now. As tears of sorrow and exasperation streamed down her cheeks, she declared that she could love no one else, but she would not wait seven years.

Days later, she was dry-eyed when they parted, but even as the little ship carrying her man disappeared into the fog of the North Sea, she was devising a plan to be reunited with him.

When she returned to her home in the country the following week, she was carrying a small parcel of men's clothing with her. Facing the mirror, she took a long last look at her beautiful red tresses, then cut her hair so she would resemble the short-cropped men of the islands. She tried on the men's clothing that she had purchased with the last of her money. Sure enough, she looked like a lad of seventeen. Women could not be hired by the HBC for service in Rupert's Land, but a lad of seventeen years could be.

Isabel Gunn assumed the name of John Fubbister, and applied for a job with the HBC that would enable her to join William somewhere in Rupert's Land across the North Atlantic Ocean. Isabel hoped that by using the same name she would find it easier to trace her lover William Fubbister in the New World colony. She could claim that he was a relative and inquire of him without arousing suspicion. Isabel signed on with the HBC in Stromness and, in January, 1806, she set sail for Hudson Bay.

Isabel ran into misfortune at once. She was posted to Fort Albany. She immediately began her search, and soon found that William was stationed at Eastmain, on the opposite shore of James Bay. It may as well have been a thousand miles, for there was no way she could make this journey on her own. She would have to continue with her deception and perform her rigorous duties so well that she would not arouse suspicion. For a month Isabel worked and lived with the men at Albany, maintaining her secret and winning their respect as a proficient worker.

Eventually, however, some of the men became suspicious that this stripling was, indeed, a woman, not a boy. The Orkneymen remained loyal to her, however, and refused to divulge her real identity to the officers of the HBC. In fact, she brightened their lonely days. They were delighted with her audacity, and were making plans to get her to Eastmain where the unsuspecting William would receive the surprise of his life. But the reunion was not to be.

John Scarth, a minor official for the company, learned of her true identity. It is known that he had become intimate with her, and it is probable that he did so by threatening to reveal her identity unless she granted him sexual favours. She soon became pregnant.

In the fall of 1806 Isabel, still acting as the lad named John Fubbister, was assigned to a brigade transporting trade goods from the coast to the interior. She was part of a brigade scheduled to spend the winter at Pembina, the settlement located a few miles south of Red River. Here, as John Fubbister, she continued to carry out the heavy tasks assigned her. But on the morning of December 29, her courageous efforts ended.

John Fubbister was having a baby. A cold, rough bunkhouse filled with strange, tough men was to be the scene of the delivery. In severe distress, she explained her situation to the men. She asked a foreman named Alexander Henry to stay with her. Moaning, she lay on the rough plank floor, stretching out her hand to him for help. "I am not a man," she blurted out, "but I am a poor wretch of an Orkney girl, pregnant and actually in childbirth." The incredulous Alexander Henry was speechless. She opened her shirt, revealing her swollen breasts. Dismayed, Henry carried her to a warmer room, where the baby was brought into the world with the good hearted though awkward help of her fellow workers.

This child, whose name is not recorded, was the first White child to be born in the Canadian North West. Mother and child were sent back to the Orkney Islands at once. She was not allowed to see, let alone marry, William Fubbister, the man for whom the whole adventure was initiated.

The tragedy did not end when she returned to the islands. The dour Calvinists of the islands would not forgive or forget the rash behaviour of a young woman masquerading as a man and, even worse, becoming pregnant out of wedlock. Both mother and child were treated with a silent scorn that destroyed Isabel's pride, making life on the islands impossible for her.

Penniless, she went south to the mainland seeking work. She was soon swallowed by the grey ghettos of Glasgow, where hunger and disease were the standard lot of the working people of the city. She died of consumption a few years later, and it is not known whether her child – the first White baby born in what is now Western Canada – survived.



THE BATTLE OF SEVEN OAKS

THOMAS DOUGLAS, the tall, slim Earl of Selkirk, had always been an introverted and sensitive man, unlike his aristocratic peers who were often haughty and arrogant in their dealings with the lower classes. Nevertheless, the Earl of Selkirk was a shrewd businessman who managed early in his career to obtain a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company.

No one knows for sure whether Lord Selkirk was motivated by philanthropy or by greed when he devised his plan to settle the vital region at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers with destitute people from the Scottish Highlands – people who had been driven from their ancient landholdings and were suffering crushing poverty and persecution. By placing these unfortunate people in the disputed region under the guns of the North West Company's Fort Gibraltar, however, Selkirk was flirting with disaster.

There was simply no way that his competitor, the North West Company, would allow Selkirk to lay claim to the very soil of this region, so vital to the successful pursuit of the fur trade. The company that controlled the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers controlled the entire transportation infrastructure upon which the fur trade in Rupert's Land depended. Control of the forks gave the company the right to deny access to all interconnecting waterways from the Athabasca country through to Montreal. In this sense, then, Selkirk's claim to this land, together with his importation of Highlanders to populate it, amounted to a tactical economic decision that had

the potential to destroy the North West Company's entire fur-trading empire in Rupert's Land..

The first party of Selkirk's settlers arrived at Red River in 1812, after spending a winter on the barren shores of Hudson Bay. Insufficiently provisioned with blankets and warm clothing, some had perished during that harsh winter. But the survivors went on to found the Red River Settlement during the summer of 1812. Other immigrants from Scotland continued to arrive, and soon an agricultural colony grew up near the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Douglas.

In 1815, a large contingent of settlers arrived from Scotland. This did not strengthen the HBC position in Rupert's Land, however, because the colony could not grow enough to feed its own population. Despite the best efforts of the settlers, their crops did not take well to the prairie climate, and the settlement continued to rely on pemmican as its main food staple.

As Red River grew in numbers with the influx of additional Scottish settlers, the officers of the North West Company agitated among the French-speaking Metis, insisting that the settlement must be wiped out before it destroyed the fur trade and the Metis way of life. But the French Metis were slow to take up arms against the settlers. They did, however, carry out limited raids in which some crops were burned. Then in the summer of 1816, Miles MacDonell, the Hudson's Bay Company's Canadian-born governor, played into the hands of his cousin, Alexander MacDonell, who, as an officer of the Nor'Westers at Whitehorse Plains, aligned himself with the North West Company in its war against the Hudson's Bay Company and the Selkirk settlers.

Late in the afternoon of June 19, 1816, events came to a head at a place called Seven Oaks, now a part of the residential section of Winnipeg. The HBC's new governor, Robert Semple, a haughty man who despised the Metis, led twenty settlers out from Fort Douglas to intercept a party of Metis believed to be transporting pemmican.

The hastily-armed settlers, many of whom had weapons that

were incapable of being fired, walked out behind their Company's governor to meet a large mounted party of Metis. On the other side, Cuthbert Grant waited quietly with well over a hundred armed men dressed in war paint, ready for action. As the HBC party approached, some Metis slipped from their horses and crawled into the shrubbery on either side of the trail, leaving a few mounted men to face the small advancing force.

Semple deployed his men in a straight line across the trail as he approached Cuthbert Grant and his visible horsemen. Here they faced each other silently for a moment. In the silence, emphasized by a warm summer breeze and the setting sun, an Indian moved toward the settlers. Semple ordered him back. Angry words were exchanged between Semple and Grant. Then a shot rang out as a settler fired at the Indian who had continued to edge forward. Immediately a second shot rang out, fired by Cuthbert Grant, which struck Semple in the thigh. The settlers fired one ragged volley at the visible line of Metis horsemen, who dived behind their horses and escaped unscathed.

The Metis who had been concealed along the trail opened up with a brisk fire from both sides. The Metis men who seconds ago were astride their horses were now concealed behind them. From positions on three sides of the settlers' skirmish line, volley after volley of gunfire came from Grant and his men. At the same time, some of the Metis came in from behind the settlers, completely surrounding them. They were now doomed. Some, like John MacLean and a Hudson's Bay Company official named Rogers, fixed bayonets and charged savagely at Grant. They were cut down by a sharp volley. Most of the settlers were killed in the first few seconds of battle, falling where they had stood, in a straight line across the trail. A few men broke and ran. They were ridden down and speared. The wounded Governor Semple was dispatched with a shot in the chest. No quarter was asked and none was given. The other wounded settlers were killed by the Metis.

The bloodshed at Seven Oaks was the catalyst that finally

motivated the British Crown to intervene in the senseless trade war. The British government forced a merger of the two companies in 1821. The merger did not bring an end to the conflict in the West, however.

Metis nationalism, born of the struggle leading to the merger, was to reappear time and time again to haunt the white shareholders and officers whose Machiavellian plots helped to create it. These same officers and shareholders were now fused together in control of a new gigantic and politically powerful monopoly that maintained the name of the senior company, the Hudson's Bay Company. Ironically, the Metis nationalism created during the struggle to achieve this monopoly was soon to become an instrument of its destruction.



THE MERGER OF 1821

THE FUR TRADE WAR that had been waged throughout the North West from the turn of the century to 1821 had been a tragic waste of life, and had cost the shareholders of both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company a fortune. Duplicate strings of trading posts had stretched across the continent so that the two companies could compete with each other in all regions where profits might be earned.

The Indian bands involved in gathering furs for the companies were shrewd traders, and they had used this competition to drive up the prices paid for their furs. As well, the companies had to compete for the available labour force, so wages were higher than would have been the case in a monopoly situation. But the real cost, the intolerable cost, was in the duplicate string of trading posts that stretched from coast to coast. Many of these posts could not show a profit since they were constructed for tactical or strategic military purposes.

The deaths of the Hudson's Bay Company settlers at Seven Oaks in 1816 started a process that changed all that. Alexander Mackenzie, largest shareholder in the North West Company, held shares in the Hudson's Bay Company as well, so the war made no sense to him. He had lobbied for years with the British government to intervene and mediate the conflict.

The war had, however, made sense to one group of people, the very people whose expertise made the fur trade possible: the wintering partners, known as the "bourgeois." These wintering partners were in effect small business partners of the

companies who earned a basic wage but also derived profits based upon the total volume of trade in their departments. For them, competition, even war, made sense.

When the Hudson's Bay Company settlers were killed in 1816 at Seven Oaks by the North West Company's militia under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant, the British state finally conceded to Mackenzie's request for intervention. The British state forced a merger of the two companies in 1821, ending the bitter conflict that had wiped out profits in the fur trade. This merger proved to be the key that opened the door to a brief but golden age of profit for the newly structured company. The Hudson's Bay Company once again held a monopoly position in British North America.

But this was a golden age for the shareholders, not for the Company's workforce, nor for the native gatherers of fur. About half the forts across North America were abandoned shortly after 1821. They had existed only because of competition and were no longer needed. Half the workforce was therefore laid off. And so for the first time in Rupert's Land a new social phenomenon appeared: massive unemployment. This was an age when unemployment meant total destitution, perhaps even starvation. And now that competition had ceased, a new policy was developed for the Indian suppliers of fur as well. There was to be no more coddling. The Company's Governor, George Simpson, described this new policy for Indians in 1822:

Their immediate wants have been fully supplied, but of course the scenes of extravagance are at an end, and it will be a work of time to reconcile them to the new order of things. . . . I have made it my study to examine the nature and character of Indians and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of subordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us.

The merger of 1821, while it served the immediate interests of the Hudson's Bay Company, nevertheless created a situation

of social instability. It immediately placed nearly half the population of Rupert's Land, those who had been laid off, outside the fur trade economy. Red River and Rupert's Land were part of a one-industry economy. The fur trade, according to the standard mercantile policies of the colonial powers, was carried out in such a way that the colony remained underdeveloped and dependent upon the mother country for all of its manufactured goods. Since agricultural or industrial pursuits were forbidden, the only way the newly-unemployed could legally survive was through a tenuous system of subsistence-level farming. To this end, the HBC granted the unemployed labourers throughout Rupert's Land 25-acre plots of land located in, or near, the Red River settlement.

The unemployed were brought to the Red River settlement at company expense, and some seed grains were given out. But crop failures were common, and subsistence-level farming proved to be a failure. Many of the Metis, particularly the French-speaking ex-employees of the North West Company, left Red River to hunt buffalo on the plains. They soon entered into illicit free trade with American merchants in St. Paul, Minnesota, which was against Hudson's Bay Company law.

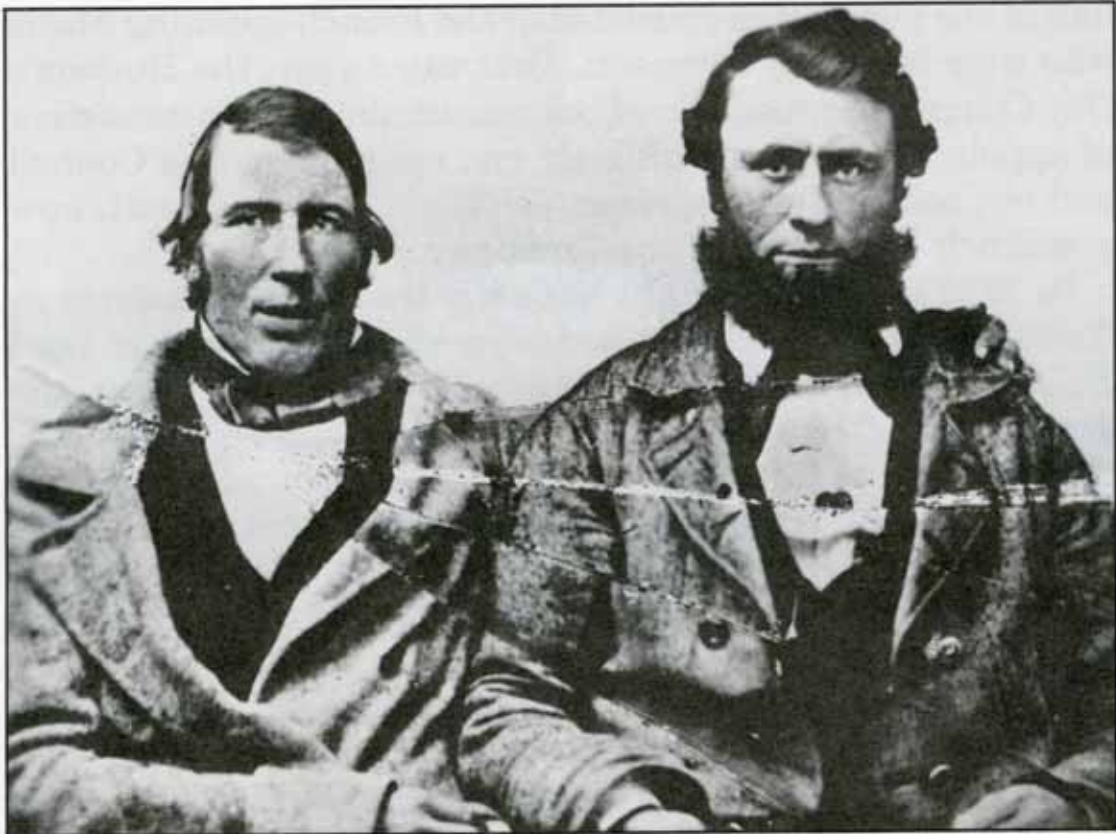
The merger of 1821, and the resulting monopoly powers it gave to the Company's governor, forced the Metis to rebel against the HBC in order to survive. After 1821, the Company was forced to set up a coercive state apparatus at Red River, and to attempt to convince the British imperial government that a permanent army should be stationed in the colony to keep the Metis in line.

A local colonial administration, the Council of Assiniboia, was appointed, and it served the Company well by fighting free trade and administering Company law. Cuthbert Grant, the famous Metis leader, was the first Company sheriff. The HBC was not successful in obtaining a permanent army to control the Metis, however, and this weakness eventually led to the end of the Hudson's Bay Company's absolute powers in North America.



THE SAYER TRIAL

IN 1824, the Hudson's Bay Company's Governor, George Simpson, in a letter to his friend Simon McTavish, expressed his fear of the Metis of Red River. Simpson wrote: "It is necessary to watch them and manage them with great care, otherwise they may become the most formidable enemy to which



Jean Louis Riel (R) and Gilluame Sayer.
Photo Credit: Manitoba Archives

the settlement is exposed." Simpson was of course aware of the Metis' illicit free trade with the American merchants, and he knew that the struggle for free trade could escalate into military conflict since the Metis had no legal alternative for economic survival in the Company-controlled one-industry economy of Rupert's Land.

For years Governor Simpson had pressured the imperial government of Great Britain to send troops to Red River. He had put in many requests during the years 1821 to 1849, but Great Britain remained reluctant to send troops to Rupert's Land. Simpson's efforts to create a local militia failed as well. Selkirk settlers, although loyal to the British Crown, were as dissatisfied as the Metis with the restrictive trade practices of the Company, and with the lack of commercial markets for their own farm produce.

By 1835 the Red River settlement was well populated, with just under five thousand people, mostly of mixed blood. About half of the population consisted of the French-speaking Metis who were feared by Simpson. That same year, the Hudson's Bay Company formed a local colonial administration consisting of appointed Company officials and clergymen. The Council had one token Metis representative – Cuthbert Grant, now a staunch supporter of the Company.

In 1835 the HBC bought back the tract of land known as Assiniboia (which included Red River) from the estate of Lord Selkirk, and the council of Assiniboia was set up as the governing body for the people of the region. It was hoped that the inclusion of Cuthbert Grant as an appointed member of the council of Assiniboia would ensure continued Metis support. But the council soon made its intentions clear; one of the first matters of business for the new council was the construction of a jail in Fort Garry.

These oppressive tactics did not make any appreciable difference to Metis free trade, however. It continued to increase, cutting into Hudson's Bay Company profits until 1849, when the Metis decided to test the council's ability to enforce its laws.

In the early spring of 1849, four Metis youths were arrested

for illicit trading activities. Guillaume Sayer, a French-speaking Metis, resisted arrest and was roughed up by Company officers, creating an emotional situation that polarized the community against the Company. The disgruntled Metis found an able spokesman in Jean-Louis Riel, father of young Louis Riel.

A demonstration was planned for the day of the Sayer trial, so Judge Adam Thom and Acting Governor Caldwell set the day of the trial for May 17th, Ascension Day, a holiday celebrated by the Catholic Metis. They hoped to forestall the expected demonstration, but Jean-Louis Riel used his influence with Bishop Provencher, and convinced the Bishop to hold mass at 8:00 a.m. so that the worshippers could attend the trial scheduled for 11:00 a.m. that day. Thus, when Judge Thom took his seat in court, he was faced by some five hundred Metis, many of whom were armed.

When Sayer went forward, escorted by a delegation of compatriots headed by Riel, Judge Thom sent an officer to talk with the protesters in an effort to defuse the situation. However, the crowd, which remained quiet and orderly, refused to be moved by the officers. Indeed, the crowd was so large that many of them had to wait outside while the court proceedings were going on.

Inside the courtroom, the prosecutor attempted to show that Sayer had in fact obtained permission from the Company to traffic in furs. He knew that the Company could not afford a guilty verdict, and hoped to sidestep the Metis power play. However, John-Louis Riel insisted on a guilty verdict for Sayer. He told Judge Thom, "We will give you only one hour to make your decision." When the hour was up, Riel announced, "To end this most miserable business we gave you one hour. It was more than was needed. The time set has passed. The trial is over; the prisoner is free. We demand that from now on trading be free all across the country." From both inside and outside the court the cheers went up. The Metis shouted "Trading is free! Trading is free!" And so it was.

The Sayer trial revealed the HBC's inability to enforce its restrictive trade laws, and free trade blossomed until 1870, when the Company's regime ended in Rupert's Land.



THE BATTLE OF THE GRAND COTEAU

ON JULY 12, 1851, in a remote corner of the prairie in what is now North Dakota, a battle took place between a small party of Metis hunters and a very large contingent of Sioux. Although this action, known as the Battle of the Grand Coteau, has not found a place in recorded history, it nevertheless had a major effect on Canadian history because it opened up the Red River trade route through Sioux territory to the burgeoning trading centre of St. Paul, Minnesota.

The stage was set for the conflict in early July of 1851, when a Metis hunting party of some three hundred twenty people (including women and children, the families of the hunters) left on a buffalo hunt into Sioux territory south of Red River. The hunting party split into two columns as they entered Sioux territory. The Metis leaders of the hunt had received word through the moccasin telegraph that the Sioux were gearing up for an attack on the Metis, whose excessive buffalo hunting was beginning to deplete their supply of food.

The two columns proceeded southward, parallel to each other, with a distance of some thirty miles being maintained between the columns. Couriers on swift horses kept the two columns in touch with one another. The leaders of both columns agreed to come to each other's help should an attack materialize. They travelled south in this manner for several uneventful days, towards the headwaters of the Cheyenne River and the big bend of the Souris River. On the evening of July 12, the smaller of the columns, reached the Grand Coteau of the Missouri