

James McMillan (1783–1858)

James was a fur trader and explorer for the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company. He led some of the earliest surveys of the lower Fraser River and founded Fort Langley for the HBC in 1827, and was its first Chief Trader.

NAME: McMillan, James		PARISH: Glen Pean, Scotland		ENTERED SERVICE: ca 1803	DATES: b. [ca 1783] d. 26 Jan 1858, Glasgow (A.16/62 fo.10)
Appointments & Service					
Outfit Year*:	Position:	Post:	District:	HBCA Reference:	
<i>*An Outfit year ran from 1 June to 31 May</i>					
[ca 1803]	NWC clerk	Fort Des Prairies dept		HBRs Vol.III, P.450	
1807	David Thompson expedition to	Upper Columbia River		HBRs Vol.III, P.450	
1808-09	wintered at Kootenae House			F.3/2 fo. 235	
1809-10	wintered at Saleesh House			Dict. Of Cdn Biog. Vol. VIII	
1810	sent to monitor Joseph Howse			"David Thompson's Narrative..." pp. 415-16.	
1821	Chief Trader		Columbia	F.3/2 fo. 235; B.239/k/1 pp.7, 16	
1822	Permitted to visit York Factory			B.239/k/1 p. 24	
1823-24	furlough spent in Canadas			B.239/k/1 p. 44	
1824	accompanied George Simpson, York Factory to the Columbia			D.3/1; B.239/k/1 p.78	
				"Fur Trade and Empire..."	
Nov, 1824	led expedition to Fraser River			Dict. Of Cdn Biog. Vol. VIII	
1825	appointed in charge of Fort Assiniboine		Saskatchewan	B.239/k/1 p.120	
1825	arrived at Norway House			B.154/a/11	
[ca 1825]	survey expedition	Jasper House to Fraser River		B.188/a/5; B.188/b/4)	
1825-27	Chief Trader	Fort Assiniboine	Columbia	B.60/a/23; B.239/k/1 pp.177, 215	
1826	Simpson expedition			B.223/a/3	
1827	Chief Factor	Fort Langley		D.4/121 fos. 17d-18; A.1/55 fo. 173;	
				B.239/k/1 p.250	
1828	furlough	Scotland		B.239/k/1 p.260	
1829-30				B.135/c/2 fos. 33d, 35d, 40, 42d-43, 45	
1830-34	appointed to establish an experimental farm, RRS			B.239/k/1 pp.288, 311; B.239/k/2 pp. 12, 37	
1834-37	Chief Factor	Lake of Two Mtns	Lake of Two Mtns	B.239/k/2 p. 62	
1837-38	Furlough granted			B.239/k/2 p. 152	
1838-39	leave of absence extended			D.4/23 fos. 87d-88	
1839	resignation			D.4/23 fos. 87d-88	



Re: pension allowance/assistance: (A.5/13; A.10/37 fo. 403; A.10/39 fo. 506; A.10/40 fos. 211-212, 222-223, 291-292, 525; A.10/41 fos. 307-308, 316, 327, A.10/42 fos. 317, 391) See also Search file : 'McMILLAN, JAMES'

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McMillan moved to North America at about age 20 and began work as a clerk for the North West Company in what is now Saskatchewan. Notably, he joined David Thompson's 1808 North West Company expedition west across the Rocky Mountains. Later, he assisted in purchasing Astoria, Oregon from the Pacific Fur Company. In June 1824, following the merger of the North West Company and the HBC, McMillan accompanied HBC Governor George Simpson from York Factory far west to the lower Columbia River, arriving in Fort George on November 8 of that year. Simpson described McMillan as a "Staunch & Manly Friend and Fellow Traveller". Ten days later, Simpson assigned McMillan with commanding an expedition to survey the mouth of the Fraser River and assess it for navigability, settlement potential and agricultural suitability. He led an exploration party of 40 men from Fort George to Puget Sound and on to Mud Bay, just east of present day Point Roberts. On local advice of a shortcut, McMillan's party proceeded east up the Nicomekl River through what is now South Surrey, British Columbia where they then portaged to the Fraser River. The expedition traveled and surveyed up the Fraser River as far as Hatzic Slough, before returning to Fort George

On June 27, 1827, McMillan was again dispatched north from the Columbia River by Simpson, this time to establish a Hudson's Bay Company presence on the lower Fraser

River. After leaving Fort Vancouver, McMillan, his 25-man party and two small boats arrived at Port Orchard on Puget Sound on July 4. There they camped, awaiting the newly acquired HBC sailing vessel the *Cadboro*, loaded with horses and supplies, which had departed Fort Vancouver on June 24 to rendezvous with McMillan's party via the open Pacific Ocean. After waiting six days, the *Cadboro* finally arrived at Port Orchard on July 10. When the ship approached the mouth of the Fraser River, McMillan set out looking for suitable locations for the establishment of the Fort. He found none in the immediate vicinity of the river's mouth and the *Cadboro* was unable to gain navigable access to the Fraser River for several days until a channel was discovered. Meanwhile, in the smaller boats, and proceeding further up river, McMillan surveyed several potential locations for the new fort on July 27-28. It was around this time that McMillan Island was named for him. Other islands named during this survey of the river were Barnston Island (for clerk George Barnston) and Annacis Island (for Clerk Francois Noel Annance). On Monday July 30, McMillan's party unloaded horses at the site he had chosen for Fort Langley and the laborious clearance of the forest commenced. The first post of the Fort was cut on August 1, 1827. He was chief Factor at Fort Langley from 1827 to 1828.

Parents:	Allan McMillan and Margaret Cameron (Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online)
Wives:	Josephite Belisle, m. [pre-1806] daughter of Bellisle (French Canadian) and Josephite ? (native) Marie Letendre, b. 1790 (Rupert's Land) daughter of Baptiste Letendre (French Canadian) and a native woman, m. [ca 1811] Marguerite 'Kil-a-ko-tah' Clatsoppe, m. 1820 as his "country wife", previously married to Mathews (American), later married to Louis Laborite (photograph of Marguerite held at the Archives of Ontario) Eleanor (Ellen, Helen) McKinley, m. [ca 1828] in Scotland; remained in Scotland while James was at RRS (B.135/c/2 fo. 54d); travelled with daughter to RRS (B.135/e/2 fos. 64d, 68d); at RRS (B.135/e/2 fo.80d); after death of James, sent requests for financial assistance to the company, ca. 1869 (A.10/73; also, Search File 'McMillan, James'); d. 18 August 1869, 94 Hill Street, Garnethill, Glasgow
Children:	From Josephite Belisle: William, b. 1806 married Margaret Dease; James b. [ca 1808] (photograph held by the Archives of Ontario) From Marie Letendre: Marie, married Pierre Parenteau; Helene b. 1811 married Jean Baptiste Boyer; Marguerite b. 16 Sept 1813 (Denney) baptized 24 Sept 1823 St. Andrew's; Allan b. 1 Jun 1816 baptized 24 Sept 1823 St. Andrew's; Angeliqye 'Nellie' (Nelly) b. [ca 1823] married John Warren Dease (D.5/33 fos. 327-328) From Marguerite 'Kil-a-ko-tah' Clatsoppe: Victoire, b. [ca 1820] married Joseph McLoughlin 8 children from Eleanor (Ellen, Helen) McKinley: Archibald b. 1816 (Perthshire, England) married Sarah Julia Ogden; daughter b. 1831; Margaret, baptized 6 Feb. 1833 (E.4/1 fo. 96d); Ewen Alexander, HBC employee b. 1837 (A.10/37 fo.403); James McMillan HBC Clerk (b. 1839; engaged 1858); Eleanor Cameron, sent letter informing the company of her mother's death on 18 August 1969 (A.10/49 fos. 194-197; A.10/79) Mother unknown: Patrick, HBC employee (A.10/40 fos. 291-292, 525) William (B.60/a/23) Allan (D.4/22 fos. 80-80d) Etienne Gregoire ("The Round Hand of George B. Roberts. Letters of Mrs. F.F. Victor" in <i>Oregon Historical Quarterly</i>, Vol. LXIII, Nos. 2, 3 (June-Sept., 1962), pp. 232-233)
Journals kept by James McMillan:	Thompson's River Post Journals 1822-1823 (B.97/a/1)



McMillan went on to become a Chief Factor at the HBC's Red River Colony, and he was brought in to manage a failed experimental farm at St. James on the Assiniboine River. In his efforts, he even enlisted a cousin, Robert Campbell from Scotland to assist on the farm with such endeavours as trying to raise sheep from Kentucky. Later, he was transferred to the Montreal area out of frustration with the farm's failure and his dislike of Red River Colony society. In 1839, McMillan retired to Scotland where he lived with his Scottish wife, Eleanor McKinley, with whom he had eight children. He also fathered at

least four North American children stemming from relations with native women from the Columbia Region, Saskatchewan and Fort George. One of whom, William McMillan, was a co-signatory to the Métis petition for special status, 1845.

Fort Langley Journals 1827-1830 (E.244/2)
Rigolet Post Journals (B.183/a)

Except from George Simpson's Character Book: "About 49 years of Age.—A very steady plain blunt man, shrewd & sensible of correct conduct and good character, but who has gone through a vast deal of severe duty and is fit for any Service requiring physical strength firmness of mind and good Management provided he has no occasion to meddle with Pen & Ink in the use of which he is deficient his Education having been neglected.—An excellent Trader, speaks several Indian Languages and is very regular and economical in all his arrangements: a good practical Man, better adapted for the executive than the Legislative departments of the business. His plain blunt manner however cannot conceal a vast deal of little highland pride, and his prejudices are exceedingly strong, but upon the whole he is among the most respectable of his class and a generally useful Man.—" (A.34/2)

References:

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Howay, F.W., "The Discovery of the Fraser River: The Second Phase", *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 4 (Oct., 1940), pp. 245-251.
Howay, F.W., "Fort Langley, Historic HBC Post in British Columbia", *The Beaver*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Nov., 1921), pp. 2-6.
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Sinclair, Warren, *Métis Genealogies*, E.235/121 "Mc"
Thomas, Gregory, "McMillan, James" *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* Vol. VIII, 1851-1860, <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=38209&query=mcmillan>
Thompson, David (ed.), *David Thompson's Narrative of his explorations in Western America 1784-1812*, Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916.
Wallace, W.S. (Ed.), *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934, pp. 482-483.
HBCS Vol. III Pp. 450-451

Search File: 'McMILLAN,CHIEF FACTOR JAMES'
Beaver Vertical File: 'Employees: McMillan, James, Chief Factor' (x2)

Filename: MacMillian, James ([ca 1783]-1858) (fl. [ca 1803]-1839); AES 2011/03



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