

COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS

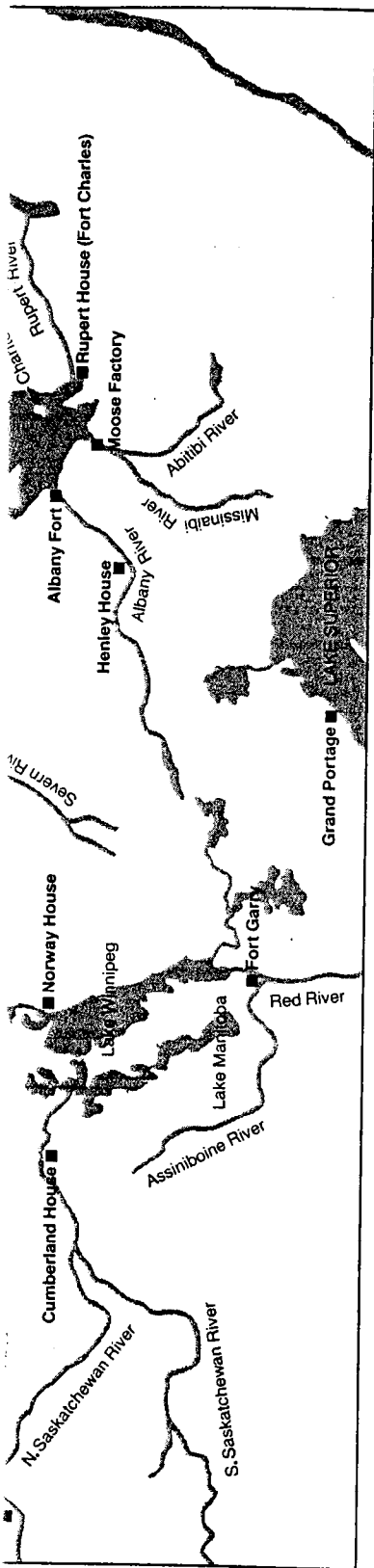
Volume I

PETER C. NEWMAN

*Reference to
Henley House*



VIKING



570-

pa
nt
ewm
ay C
he p
the
gran
ce R
rers,
est p
ever
s te
e ea
e H
str
o S
iii.
ors
lon
lan
s of
aw
ita
fly
Tr
ow
rv
gle
rv
re
ir
es
v
vo
u
no
ri
s
te
e
to

VIKING

Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 2801 John Street, Markham,
Ontario, Canada L3R 1B4
Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England
Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010 U.S.A.
Penguin Books Australia Ltd., Ringwood, Victoria, Australia
Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd., Private Bag, Takapuna, Auckland 9, New Zealand

First published by Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1985

Copyright © Power Reporting Limited, 1985

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book. Care has been taken to trace ownership of copyright material contained in this book. The publishers will gladly receive any information that will enable them to rectify any reference or credit line in subsequent editions.

Book design by V. John Lee
Printed in Canada by T.H. Best Printing Company Ltd.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Newman, Peter C., 1929-
Company of Adventurers

Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-670-80379-0 (bound).
ISBN 0-670-80877-6 (leather-bound).

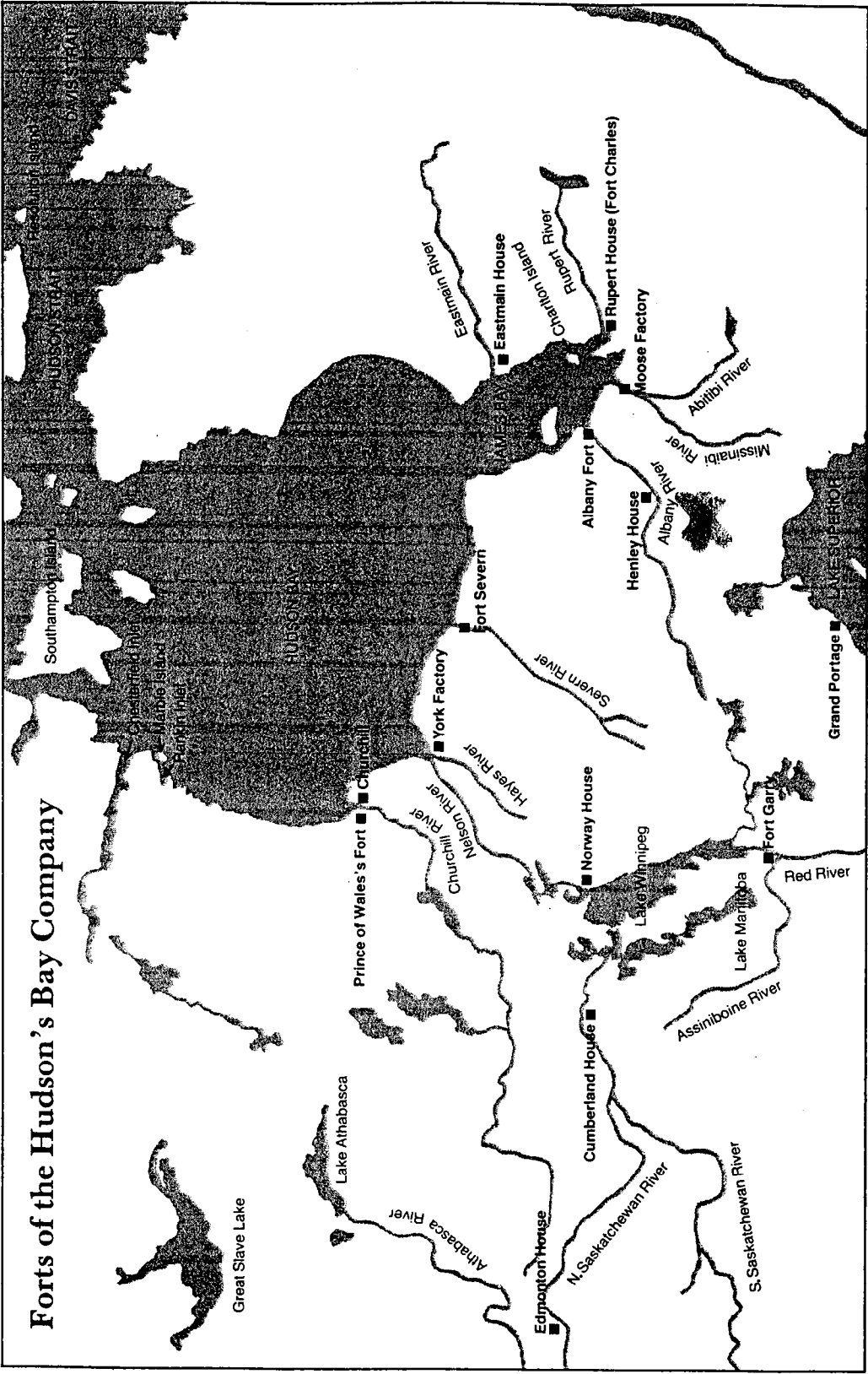
1. Hudson's Bay Company - History. 2. Northwest,
Canadian - History - To 1870.* 3. Fur trade -
Canada - History. I. Title.

FC3207.N49 1985 971.2'01 C85-098658-3
F1060.N49 1985

For H. ALBERT HOCHBAUM
of Arctic lore and pain
that the assaults of time
on the Canadian North
they are worse

and for PROFESSOR RICHARD
much of the Hudson's Bay
and so generously shared
with an enquiring chronicler

I wish also to thank the
for not even *trying* to inquire
during the research and
Except for granting me access
archives and files, the publisher
financial or editorial -
My only debt to the Company
is a slightly overdue debt
the cheque is in the mail



Forts of the Hudson's Bay Company

CO
ADV
PETE

IN D
om
dv
r C.
lson's
ount o
rmine
rles I
sin, Pr
Adven
ld's la
re has
he H
fth of
size of
lomin
down
to Ha
Gov
ices o
gs of E
direc
n nev
ed was
vman
valier
little
yne d
ch st
n who
scape
ory.
elling
s a co
enture
iers, t
lson B
specto
ces; I
e to t
Thar
ed the
re the
y and
lernes
pany

to his principals in London, Knight complained that York's facilities were "nothing but a confused heap of old rotten houses without form or strength very not sufficient to secure your goods from the weather, not fit for men to live in without being exposed to the frigid winter. My own place I have to live in this winter is not half so good as our cowhouse was in the Bottom of the Bay, and I have never been able to see my hand in it since I have been there without a candle. It is so black and dark, cold and wet withal, nothing to make it better but heaping up earth about it to make it warm."

Except for the very occasional foray, the Company's disposition was to sit quietly on the periphery of the bay, routinely manning its trading posts.

The dynamics of the fur trade had grown static, if not altogether comatose. Hardly anything interrupted its monotonous rhythm, unless it was some outrage of the interlopers from Montreal or a diplomatic spat in Leipzig. The financial reporting and management methods put in place by Sir Bibye Lake functioned as if the perpetual Governor had perfected a perpetual money machine. As long as the Company's profits were reflected in respectable dividends and the Indians continued to fetch the furs, there was judged to be no particular need to expand the Company's activities, no purpose in initiating grand new policies on a search for the North West Passage, inland exploration or very much else.

HUDSON BAY IS AN INLAND SEA nearly as large as the Mediterranean; its shoreline meanders for 7,600 miles, a distance only 300 miles shorter than the earth's diameter at the equator, but during the eighteenth century, the HBC governors dispatched no more than two hundred men at a time to exploit their immense holdings. John Oldmixon, in his 1708 study *The British Empire in America*, admitted that he should have led off his book with a description of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories, but explained, "There being no Towns nor Plantations in this Country, but two or three poor Forts to defend the Factories, we thought we were at Liberty to place it where we pleas'd, and were loath to let our History open with the Description of so miserable a Wilderness." Except for Albany Fort and the recaptured York Factory (1714), occupation of Hudson Bay by the Company for more than fifty years was limited to trading-depots at Moose Factory, Rupert House and Churchill (Prince of Wales's Fort), with outstations at Eastmain and later, Henley House and Severn.

It was by a quirk of geography that this initial British occupation came through the back door, a territory that was struggling unsuccessfully for the North West Passage," noted Tim Ball, "coupled with the desire to avoid the North Atlantic Drift, the earliest trading-posts were established in the estuaries of several large rivers. The movement of goods to and from the interior was hardly a comfortable chore."

Except for its relative proximity to the estuaries of several large rivers, the movement of goods to and from the interior was hardly a comfortable chore.

The November 1754 issue of the *Public Record Office* contains a sensible suggestion that "the Bay might serve as an English settlement instead of hanging them by the neck. It would corrupt the natives of our colonies, and the victims should always be sent to the uninhabited, because there they are secure from their former oppressors and consequently have the opportunity of doing good." The *Public Record Office* contains documents that outline the Irish government take over of the settlement, administered by a military governor, the farther north the more criminal, the farther north the more lawless and confirmed offenses.

The HBC posts were not lunar colonies. During the eighteenth century (years), the Bay men had an annual visit of a solitary French raider permitting being thrust into such situations. Aspects because many loyal servants were sent to the term. One servant named James was in the Bay for ten years without request in Britain, perhaps, or of the Bay.

The daily and seasonal activities were meticulously recorded by the Bay men, laboriously lettered with

It was by a quirk of geography and navigational limitations that his initial British occupation of Canada came through its north-central back door, a territory that nearly three centuries later would still be struggling unsuccessfully for economic viability. "The search for the North West Passage," noted University of Winnipeg geographer Dr. Tim Ball, "coupled with the practice of latitude sailing and efforts to avoid the North Atlantic Drift, resulted in early explorers to Canada arriving via the Davis and Hudson straits into Hudson Bay, so that the earliest trading-posts were established on its shores."

Except for its relative proximity to Britain and the fact that the estuaries of several large river systems emptied into it, inviting the movement of goods to and from the continent's interior, Hudson Bay was hardly a comfortable choice.

The November 1754 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* carried the sensible suggestion that "the countries bordering on Hudson Bay might serve as an English Siberia, where we might hold our convicts, instead of hanging them by thousands at home, or transporting them to corrupt the natives of our colonies." Then it righteously added: "Convicts should always be sent to a country barren, and in a manner uninhabited, because there they cannot corrupt by their bad example; are secure from their former temptations; and must be industrious - and consequently have the best chance of reforming, and growing good." The Public Records office of Northern Ireland in Belfast contains documents that outline a similar proposal, suggesting that the Irish government take over Hudson Bay and turn it into a huge penal settlement, administered by one simple rule-of-thumb: the worse the criminal, the farther north he should be sent "with the most enormous and confirmed offenders handed over to the Eskimos as slaves."

The HBC posts were not prisons. They were more reminiscent of lunar colonies. During their tours of duty (three, or more usually five years), the Bay men had to be utterly self-reliant. Except for the brief annual visit of a solitary Company supply ship (weather, ice and French raiders permitting), the tiny posts were on their own. Pride in being thrust into such self-reliance seemed to have its therapeutic aspects because many loyal Company men signed up for term upon term. One servant named John Paterson stayed at Churchill for seventeen years without requesting a visit home - a measure of his family life in Britain, perhaps, or of the defiant euphoria of sheer survival.

The daily and seasonal cycle of events at the HBC's outposts was meticulously recorded by the resident Factor in each post's journal, laboriously lettered with goose-quill pen and thawed ink, either in his

1686

The main struggle for possession of the tiny forts on Hudson Bay begins with the expedition of Chevalier de Troyes from Montreal.

1687

Marlborough petitions James II to argue that the HBC had spent £200,000 on forts and factories destroyed by the French and should be compensated.

1690

Henry Kelsey begins a series of explorations for the company to the prairie lands, penetrating the interior to south-eastern Saskatchewan; HBC stock triples in value (a 200 percent stock bonus) to reflect the value of fortifications and establishments; the "Great Dividend" of 74 percent (actually a 25 percent dividend based on increased stock of £31,500) is declared and paid; HBC is called the only flourishing company in the kingdom, but no dividends are paid out again until 1718; with little opposition Parliament passes a private bill confirming the HBC's monopoly for another seven years.

1692

The goldsmith-banker Sir Stephen Evans replaces Marlborough as HBC Governor.

1694

Governor Sir Stephen Evans is ejected from the Customs Board for poor attendance; Radisson sues the HBC for back pay by filing a suit in Chancery Court.

1696

The English, with four ships, recover all the James Bay forts, and the men of the captured garrisons are taken prisoner to England.

1697

On September 5, the French fleet of four warships under d'Iberville on the *Pelican*, off the mouth of the Nelson River, inflicts defeat on the HBC ships

Hudson's Bay, Hampshire and Dering;

Fort Nelson is burned; the Treaty of Ryswick, signed in September, leaves the French in possession of all the settlements along the bay (except Fort Albany) for seventeen years; Thomas Lake buys his first HBC stock on May 13 during a drop in the market and becomes a dominant shareholder.

1700

Sir William Trumbull retires as Governor of the HBC after four years and Sir Stephen Evans takes the post for the second time; Radisson's application for the job of warehouse-keeper is not accepted by the company.

1710

Radisson dies in England; his widow Elizabeth (his third wife) is given £6 by the Company for his funeral expenses.

1712

Sir Bibye Lake is appointed HBC Governor.

1713

By the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, France relinquishes all claims to Hudson Bay, which again becomes a British possession.

1714

James Knight reclaims York Factory; William Stuart explores north of York Factory this summer and next.

1730

HBC critic Arthur Dobbs begins a twenty-year attack on the HBC, accusing the company of failing to explore its granted territories and of reaping great profits.

1734

Construction on new Prince of Wales's Fort begins at mouth of the Churchill River.

1743

Benjamin Pitt is appointed HBC Governor; Joseph Isbister opens Henley House at the junction of the Albany and Kenogami rivers.

1745

The Jacobite rising is led by the two five-year-old Bonnie Prince Charles; the British Parliament offers a reward of £20,000 for discovery of a Northwest Passage, and adds an award of £5,000 for reaching the North Pole.

1749

British House of Commons Committee is appointed to consider the trade territory of the HBC; report favors HBC and disallows Dobbs's petition.

1750

Sir Atwell Lake is appointed HBC Governor.

1752

The HBC London Committee approves a proposal by James Isham, Factor at York, to move inland from the coast to counter French competition.

1754

Anthony Henday, starting from York Factory, traces the Saskatchewan River for the Company.

1755

Woudbee and his sons Snuff-Blanket and Sheanapp are hired by the HBC after Henley House is destroyed.

1756

The Seven Years' War begins.

1761

The HBC dispatches Captain Christopher to examine Chesapeake Inlet; New York fur traders come to move into New France.

1763

On February 10, the Treaty of Paris ends the Seven Years' War, resulting in the withdrawal of French government from Quebec; Henley House is opened for trade for the third time.

1765

Bibye Lake is appointed HBC Governor; the Stamp Act, in effect March 22, aggravates economic depression in the American colonies; the HBC starts a war