Origins of the trapping brigade

In the overall history of the North American fur trade, the trapping brigade was an atypical and short-lived phenomenon. From the very early sixteenth century and perhaps even earlier, when French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English fishermen and explorers found the Indians along the coasts of Newfoundland and New England eager to exchange animal pelts for European goods, the basic modus operandi of the trade was to induce the natives to hunt for furs and to deliver them at fixed posts or to traders who moved about among the tribes. These practices are still the rule in northern Alaska, northern Canada, and wherever else a significant native hunting economy has survived. Large-scale hunting and trapping for furs by Europeans was a relatively rare occurrence before the mid eighteenth century.

This is not to say that prior to about 1760 the harvesting of furs personally by Europeans was unknown or that the number
of pelts gathered in this manner was insignificant. As early as 1618 French fur traders along the St. Lawrence feared competition from settlers who "would hunt by themselves." Soon after the Hudson's Bay Company established posts in Rupert's Land its employees were encouraged to hunt and trap for furs under evolving sets of regulations which permitted the men and officers to augment their incomes somewhat by this means.

However, the fur most desired by the traders during this early period was beaver, and the hunting of beavers prior to the introduction of steel traps was a difficult and arduous task best performed by Indians learned in the ways of wild animals. Sometimes the natives used "awkward wooden traps," deadfalls, or similar devices to snare the beavers, but these methods frequently failed. More intensive hunting was possible after iron tools were introduced by Europeans. Beaver dams could be cut and ponds drained, exposing the animals' houses and burrows. By closing all entrances to these refuges with wooden stakes, the hunters could then slaughter their prey with ice chisels affixed to long handles. Another, similar, technique was to use spears to disturb the refuges and then drive the beavers out into nets set between rows of stakes at the entrances.

Extensive beaver hunting by Europeans only became practical after the introduction of the steel beaver trap about the middle of the eighteenth century. According to David Thompson, the great geographer for the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies,
it was the Indians of Canada and New Brunswick who first thought of employing the steel trap, which had long been successfully used to catch foxes and other animals, for the harvesting of beaver. Be this as it may, he was certainly mistaken when he stated that this innovation took place about 1797. Correspondence, inventories, and newspaper advertisements prove conclusively that "beaver traps" were being employed in the British fur trade at Detroit, Montreal, New York, Virginia, and elsewhere at least as early as the 1760s.

But Thompson probably was correct when he wrote that steel traps were at first only moderately successful in catching beaver because no really satisfactory bait could be found. After much searching some natives discovered "by chance" that castoreum -- a musky secretion found in the perineal glands of the beaver -- was an almost irresistible lure. "The secret of this bait was soon spread," said Thompson; "every Indian procured from the traders four to six steel traps .... All labour was now at an end; the hunter moved about at pleasure with his traps and infallible bait of castorum." The experienced Nor'Wester, David Harmon, observed that at least by 1818 "the greater part of the Indians" east of the Rocky Mountains were taking their beaver with steel traps.

This change in hunting technique came at an opportune time for the European traders. Even from the beginning of the traffic there had been native groups who were disinclined to hunt beaver
or who were diverted from the chase by intertribal warfare, 
migrations to seek food, or other causes incident to native life. 
In short, the natives, even though they were generally increasingly 
dependent upon European goods, were not always reliable suppliers 
of furs. The traders discovered that in many cases European 
hunters were more effective, and they came to depend to a greater 
extent upon their own personnel and upon the "freemen" — trappers 
who were not employed by any company. This development was 
made possible by the adoption for beaver hunting of the steel 
trap, a device Europeans could employ with as devastating an 
effect as could the Indians. But as late as 1797 two prominent 
Montreal traders were able to state, without too much stretching 
of the truth, that "all" the furs sent from Canada to England 
were "had from the Indians in exchange for British Manufactured 
goods." 

The problem of finding reliable native groups to harvest 
and barter furs became more acute after the fur trade advanced 
through the eastern forest belt and out onto the Great Plains and 
into the Rockies. Many tribes in those regions scorned beaver 
hunting. They were quite satisfied with their cultures based on 
the buffalo and the horse. For the most part the only trade goods 
they craved were guns, ammunition, axes, knives, tobacco, liquor, 
and a few other items. For these they periodically consented to 
provide provisions as well as furs or they brought in pelts 
pillaged from others, but because of their frequent wars and
other diversions they often could not be counted on for a steady supply of beaver pelts.

The experience of David Thompson on the Missouri River in 1797 was typical. Sent by the North West Company to explore the region, he reached the Mandan villages and urged the Indians there to trap beaver and bring the furs north to the firm's posts on the Assiniboine River. But the natives remained noncommittal. They were, he later reported, "well satisfied with their conditions of living" and "preferred to hunt bison." 11

On the other hand, Lewis and Clark met a Cheyenne chief at the Arikara villages in 1806 who begged the explorers to send traders to his people so that the Cheyennes could learn how to trap beaver. Other Indians, such as the Shoshone, also welcomed the traders and became "past masters of the beaver trap." 12 But on balance many traders west of the Mississippi and of Lake Winnipeg found that the most efficient method of harvesting beaver was to trap the animals themselves.

This accelerated move toward hunting by Europeans and by Indians from distant eastern tribes, particularly by organized groups of employees or bands of freemen as distinguished from trapping by individuals, begins to be obvious in the records during the first decade of the nineteenth century, although the trend began much earlier. Near Rainy Lake in 1800 Daniel Harmon met three canoes of Iroquois bound for the upper Red River to hunt beaver for the North West Company. 13 During that year
Alexander Henry, of the same firm and in the same Red River area, frequently had "all" the employees at his Park River Post out trapping. Eight years later, near the mouth of the Saskatchewan River, Harmon met a trader who had brought a few goods from Canada to "carry on a small traffick with the Natives," and "occasionally to hunt the beaver, &c., himself." The same trend towards increased trapping by Europeans and by eastern Indians was evident on the United States frontier, particularly after the purchase of Louisiana Territory in 1803. Even before the Lewis and Clark expedition about 150 French Canadians living in the Illinois River area had started to move westward, ascending the Missouri and heading for the mountains, hunting as they went. By the time David Thompson met these freemen in 1809 they were living among the Indians west of the Rockies, their number reduced to a mere twenty-five, largely due to involvement in native wars.

Lewis and Clark encountered a number of small parties of Europeans while traveling up the Missouri in 1804. Most of these men were traders, but several were specifically described as hunters. On the return journey in 1806 other traders and trappers were met, heading for the mountains. John Colter, a member of the exploring party, obtained his discharge to join two of these men for a hunt in the Yellowstone River area. By the time Colter made his way homeward down the Missouri in 1807 the stimulating effect of the Lewis and Clark expedition upon the St. Louis fur
trade was obvious. Above the mouth of the Platte he met a large
party of hunters and traders on their way to the Bighorn River
under the command of Manuel Lisa. Others were also in the field.

Lisa's reports on the fur riches of the upper Missouri waters
were so glowing that a number of St. Louis businessmen joined him
in forming the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company. In 1809 the new
firm sent about three hundred men to a fort Lisa had established
earlier on the Bighorn. A part of this force spent the winter
successfully trading and trapping among the Crows. The next
spring an expedition was sent to build a fort at the Three Forks
of the Missouri. It was intended that the men should trap if a
profitable trade could not be opened with the Indians there.
Blackfoot hostility soon put an end to this project, but the
survivors brought the fruits of their hunting -- thirty packs of
beaver pelts -- back to the Bighorn post. Another party under
Andrew Henry crossed the Continental Divide in 1810 and built a
short-lived fort on the north fork of Snake River -- the first
American post west of the Rocky Mountains. Still other detachments
were sent to trap among the Arapahoe and to the upper Arkansas
River. Indian hostility and other misfortunes brought heavy
losses in men and money, and by 1812 American traders and trappers
alike had largely abandoned the upper Missouri and the northern
Rockies.

Revival of the trade in these regions was slow following the
War of 1812. Between 1821 and 1823 a reorganized Missouri Fur Company made a valiant effort, sending some 300 men to the upper Missouri, erecting posts, and trading and trapping. But once more attacks by the Blackfeet brought financial disaster.  

Up to this period much of the trapping by Americans on the upper Missouri and beyond, particularly on the part of the larger and more strongly financed companies, had been conducted as an adjunct of trading operations, whether from fixed posts or by mobile parties. Now an additional step was to be taken in the evolution of the trapping brigade.

William H. Ashley and Andrew Henry, both of St. Louis, decided on a new approach to the fur trade of the Far West. No longer would they rely upon Indians to hunt beaver pelts. Trading, while not entirely abandoned, was to be subordinated. Reliance for profits was to be placed mainly on a large force of non-Indian trappers who would be carried to the mountains and then sent far and wide to scour the country for beaver.  

The enterprise was publicly launched on February 13, 1822, with the famous advertisement in the Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser offering employment to one hundred "Enterprising Young Men" willing to "ascend the river Missouri to its source, there to be employed for one, two or three years." Boat hands, clerks, and perhaps a few other men were to be on wages or salaries, but the hunters and trappers were to receive only their outfits and half the skins they harvested. As has been seen, the free
trapper — or freeman in British usage — was no invention of Ashley and Henry, but as Dale Morgan has pointed out, this large influx of unsalaried trappers "would revolutionize the Western fur trade." 23

Henry started up the Missouri with an advance party early in 1822 and erected a post at the mouth of the Yellowstone. From there and from a replacement fort built during the next year near the mouth of the Big Horn, bands of trappers advanced into the wilderness. One of these expeditions, under the leadership of Jedediah Smith, made the effective discovery of South Pass in 1824, thus opening an easy road across the Rockies and on beyond to the Great Basin and the Snake River region. 24

The exploitation of these areas, so rich in beaver, required a new method of operation. Up to that point Ashley and Henry had considered it necessary to maintain posts as bases of supply for the field parties and as shipping points for the returns. But during the summer of 1825 Ashley had his scattered bands of trappers meet him on Green River, where he distributed their outfits for the next year and picked up their furs for transport to St. Louis. It became apparent to him that this innovation was more efficient than the old system, since the high cost of maintaining fixed posts could be eliminated and the trappers could be kept longer in the field, particularly during the winter season when pelts were prime. The use of pack horses and wagons to bring in supplies by the shorter Platte River-South Pass route was less
expensive than the traditional employment of boats up the Missouri. Thus the rendezvous was born. 25

Beginning in the early 1820s, American trappers moved out across the Southwest from bases in Taos and Santa Fé. Small parties and even occasional medium-sized brigades of these hunters operated as far north as the Green River region, the Great Basin, and even the Snake Country. But as a rule these bands found it difficult to compete in the north with the more highly organized and better financed St. Louis and British traders, and they concentrated their efforts in the southern portions of the beaver country. The rendezvous system did not take hold among these hunters. For their purposes the merchants of New Mexico and, later, of a few scattered forts proved adequate sources of supplies and convenient markets for furs. 26

The origins of the use of organized trapping parties or brigades by the Hudson's Bay Company east of the Rockies is still a little-known subject. Early in 1820 the firm sent a party under Ignace Glasson to explore trade opportunities across the range into New Caledonia -- the present northern interior of British Columbia -- but trapping was also one of its objectives. The men returned with six packs of furs, the fruits "of their own hunts." 27

While George Simpson was in charge of the Athabasca Department during the winter of 1820-1821 he noted that there were a number of "free" Canadians and Iroquois in the Peace River region.
These men had shown themselves to be better hunters than the native Indians. It was partly to keep these people usefully occupied and partly to meet American competitors from the south in what was thought to be a rich beaver country that a Company officer in 1821 suggested sending a "Hunting Party" into the region between the South Saskatchewan River and the Missouri. Both the Committee in London and Governor Simpson heartily approved, and the Bow River Expedition went into the field during the fall of 1822. The returns were so meager, however, that the enterprise was never repeated.  

Early development of the trapping brigade on the Pacific Slope

The evolution of organized trapping parties west of the Rockies certainly was not an independent movement. Techniques evolved in the east were carried across the mountains where they were modified by new conditions. Fortunately, sufficient records are available to permit the changes to be traced with reasonable certainty.

The inland fur trade on the Pacific Slope was pioneered by the enterprising men of the North West Company which operated from Montreal. Pushing up the Peace and North Saskatchewan Rivers, this firm established a number of posts in New Caledonia and in the upper Columbia Basin between 1805 and 1810.  

From extant journals and correspondence of the leaders involved it appears that practically all the fur returns from these early operations were gained by the traditional method of trading with
the natives. There were, however, a few freemen in the region, particularly among the Flathead and Kutenai Indians, who undoubtedly brought in furs obtained by trapping, and it is possible that employees also engaged in hunting beaver.30

When John Jacob Astor, an important fur merchant in New York and Montreal, decided about 1808 to enter the field in the Pacific Northwest he planned to operate on a somewhat different principle from that of the Nor'Westers. Among other things, he provided from the outset for the employment of non-Indian trappers to supplement trade with the natives. The reasons for this decision are not clear. Astor was a close observer of the St. Louis fur trade, and undoubtedly he was aware that Europeans often proved to be more efficient trappers than Indians in the Far West. He also had close contacts with the Nor'Westers and may have learned of their opinion that hostile natives along the immediate shores of the Pacific would preclude normal trading operations there until friendly relations gradually could be established.31

Forming the Pacific Fur Company during the summer of 1810, Astor soon dispatched two expeditions to the Oregon Country. One went by sea around the Horn with the objective of founding a base at the mouth of the Columbia River. The second, commanded by Wilson Price Hunt, was to travel overland to unite with the party arriving by sea. On his way west Hunt stopped in St. Louis where, among other things, he hired a few additional men. Several of these were enlisted specifically as "hunters," but in the words
of Washington Irving, they were engaged "not merely to kill game for provisions, but also, and indeed chiefly, to trap beaver and other animals." Hunt also purchased beaver traps in St. Louis. Additional trappers were recruited during the ascent of the Missouri.

After crossing the Continental Divide, the overland party spent the winter of 1811-1812 toiling down the valley of the Snake River and then the Columbia. During this dreadful journey Hunt left two small parties of beaver hunters on the upper waters of the Snake. It has been stated that these men "were probably the first white trappers in the Snake Country." It is perfectly clear, however, that a portion of the region had been trapped during the previous winter by Andrew Henry and his men, several of whom were with Hunt. In any case, the activities of these parties, due to various untoward circumstances, were without final success, though they did serve to confirm previous observations as to the rich beaver resources of the region.

When Hunt reached the mouth of the Columbia during February, 1812, he found that the expedition by sea had long since arrived and had constructed a headquarters post named Astoria. Furthermore, the first arrivals had pushed inland and established a post at Okanogan (1811), and Robert Stuart had explored the Willamette Valley to see if it would be desirable to build another post there. With Stuart on this occasion was a remarkable man, Régis Bruguier, a French-Canadian freeeman who had wandered down the
Columbia to "try his luck" with the Americans. Bruguier went along with Stuart "to follow his pursuits as a trapper" and thus apparently became the first free trader to hunt in the Willamette Valley and the forerunner of a group which was to be a powerful force both in motivating and manning future trapping brigades.36

After the arrival of Hunt's reinforcements the Astorians vigorously expanded their operations inland. During 1812 posts were established on Thompson's River north of Okanogan; near the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers and next to an already erected North West Company post; among the Flatheads; among the Kutenais; and in the Willamette Valley. Apparently business at these stations was largely conducted on the basis of trade with the natives, although there is evidence of trapping by Europeans also. For example, records show that among the furs received at Astoria from the Willamette post before June 1, 1813, were 154 beaver skins from "Corson & DeLarnay," free hunters.37 As far as can be determined, however, trapping from these fixed posts was on a small scale and did not contribute much to the development of the fur brigade as an institution except by increasing the number of freemen and by revealing to them the tempting fur resources of several districts.

More important with respect to future trapping parties were two other Astorian enterprises. The first began in May, 1812, when the partners of the Pacific Fur Company at Astoria
resolved to send one of their number, Donald McKenzie, to "winter" on the Snake river." McKenzie had passed his apprenticeship in the fur trade as a well-connected young clerk in the North West Company. "Chronically discontented," he left the Nor'Westers and joined the Astor firm, displaying his superb skill as a mountaineer during the overland journey with Hunt. His abundance of nervous energy caused his companions on the Columbia to dub him "Perpetual Motion" McKenzie.

McKenzie ascended the Columbia and then, according to Washington Irving, turned up the Snake River as far as the mouth of the "Shahaptan," which he followed "some distance" and established a post, which might more properly be termed a camp. The location of this establishment is a matter of some dispute among historians, but probably it was on the Clearwater not far from the present Lewiston. He soon found that the Nez Percés in the vicinity "did not take kindly to the idea that they become trappers, pronouncing such work fit only for squaws." But he also discovered that these natives possessed large herds of excellent horses, and after some difficulty he was able to trade for enough to meet the needs of his own party and of Fort Spokane as well.

Not being able to persuade the proud Nez Percés to trap, McKenzie sent out his own men "in various directions" to hunt beaver, but they met with little success. By June 1, 1813, his
inventory of furs amounted to only $483, whereas at the same
time Fort Spokane had $5,617.60 in furs on hand, while there
were pelts valued at $11,576.65 at Okanogan. Discouraged,
McKenzie abandoned his camp and returned to Astoria. 44

This experience convinced McKenzie that although the Snake
River region contained a good stock of beaver, the animals were
so scattered that trading from fixed posts would not be profitable.
The Nez Percés, the Snakes, and the Shoskones were not always as
coope rative as the Kutenais, the Flatheads, and the bands about
Okanogan, Thompson River, and Fort Spokane. He came to believe
that the Snake Country should be hunted by wandering bands of
non-Indian trappers who could seek out the beaver on even the
most isolated and distant streams. 45 Such a method of operation
would require a change from the traditional fur trader's reliance
upon canoes and boats as the chief means of transportation to the
use of horses. Few streams in the Snake Country were navigable
for any considerable distance. McKenzie's sojourn among the Nez
Percés had shown him where those horses could be obtained.

The second Astorian enterprise which was to influence the
development of the fur brigade on the Pacific Slope was an
expedition sent out from Astoria during the summer of 1813 to
"winter in the Snake Country in order to meet with those Hunters
already in that quarter" and to trade and trap for furs. 46 The
hunters referred to were several of the trappers left in the
region by Hunt.
The party was under the command of Clerk John Reed and, after having lost two Canadians and been joined by three of the lost hunters, numbered all told only eight men, one woman, and two children. Reed built a "house" near the mouth of the Boise River, and the men separated into still smaller groups and scattered to the beaver grounds. Indians -- never identified to this day -- fell upon the isolated bands and killed every man. Only the woman, the wife of Pierre Dorian, and her two children managed to escape. This disaster, coming on top of other unpleasant incidents, convinced the traders in the Columbia region that it was not safe for small parties to operate in the Snake Country.

Meanwhile, time had run out for the Astorians. The War of 1812 had ended their prospects for success, and during October, 1813, the partners on the Columbia sold out to their rivals, the Nor'Westers. Many Astorians returned East, but a number joined the North West Company. Others turned themselves loose to become free trappers. Thus the hard-earned lessons learned by the Astorians were kept in memory and within a few years served to influence further steps in the development of the fur brigades. Evolution of the trapping brigade under the North West Company

If the words of eyewitness Alexander Ross are to be trusted, the North West Company was slow to take advantage of the near-monopoly position it had obtained in the Oregon Country as the result of its purchase of the Astorian enterprise. Its
representatives on the Columbia continued to trade largely from fixed posts, each manager "not deviating from the steps of his predecessor but adhering as much as possible to the old habits and convenience while jaunting up and down the river in the old beaten path," and little effort was made to reduce expenditures. As a result, though the fur returns were increasing annually, the financial balance sheets were a disappointment to the Montreal partners. 48

The council of "winterers" and agents which met at Fort William on Lake Superior during the summer of 1315 decided to remedy this situation.49 Among other reforms, operations on the Columbia were to be extended "on the south and east towards California and the mountains, embracing a new and unexplored tract of country." Instead of establishing new permanent posts in these regions which experience had shown to contain "so many warlike and refractory natives," strong trapping parties were to "range" these areas to harvest the furs. And the Columbia region was to be divided into two separate departments, one for the lower river and coast, the other for the inland portion.50

How much these radical measures were due to the advice of Donald McKenzie is not known, but it seems most likely that his counsel was sought. He was in the East at the time, having rejoined the North West Company after the failure of Astor's Pacific enterprise. At any rate, he was appointed to head the
inland operations on the Columbia, and he was back at Fort George by early October, 1816.51

James Keith, in charge of the coastal section, received McKenzie coldly and refused to give him the men and supplies needed for the inland expansion contemplated by the Fort William council. Not to be deterred, McKenzie took the few resources offered him and set out for his district. "Never during my day had a person for the interior left Fort George with such a motley crew, nor under such discouraging circumstances," observed Alexander Ross.52 Delayed by ice at the Cascades, McKenzie could do little more that season than visit Okanagan (as the British spelled the name), Spokane House, and perhaps one or two other posts in his district and to make arrangements for the next season.53

At Fort George in the spring of 1817 McKenzie received little more cooperation than he had the previous fall. Thus he once more started inland "with a motley and disaffected handful of men, chiefly Iroquois, to prosecute the introductory part of his reform plan."54 One of his objectives was to move his district headquarters from Spokane House, near the present City of Spokane. Although a comfortable post, it was far from the main communication route along the Columbia, and McKenzie believed it an unsuitable base for his projected expeditions to the fur regions to the eastward. But he had received neither the employees nor the authority required for construction of a new depot, so after his
several posts were outfitted he set off with thirty-five men, mostly Iroquois, on a hunting and exploring expedition. His hopes for a major test of the new system were dashed, however, when the unruly Iroquois insisted on trading privately with the Nez Percés and finally attempted to assassinate him. He was forced to leave the rebels behind and with a few loyal men, mostly Canadians and Hawaiians, made a three-month winter journey, evidently into the region along the Snake River. A "good" understanding was reached with several tribes in the area, but beyond that the results seem not to be recorded.55

When the Columbia officers and clerks met at Fort George in the summer of 1818 a changed atmosphere was evident. Peremptory orders had been received from Fort William to place 100 men at McKenzie's disposal and to build a new interior headquarters. On July 11, 1818, McKenzie and his reinforcements camped at a spot he had previously selected near the junction of the Columbia and Walla Walla rivers. The bleak site offered few hopes of comfort for the men, but it possessed superb strategic advantages for the trade. The Astorians had found that the Walla Walla Valley provided a convenient access route to the interior. Also, the neighborhood was a trading ground for several Indian groups, thus facilitating the purchase of horses which were required in large quantity for travel in a region where boats and canoes were of small use. And the new post was well situated as a collection and shipping point for the fur harvests not only of the Snake
Country but of New Caledonia and of the Kootenai and Flathead regions as well. The fort was so strongly built that Alexander Ross called it "the Gibralter of the Columbia," but its official name was Fort Nez Percés. It was later more commonly known as Fort Walla Walla.

McKenzie was forced to spend a number of weeks in difficult and delicate negotiations with the Cayuse and other native groups for permission to pass through their lands. Once this was obtained preparations were made for his great innovation -- a strong trapping expedition to exploit the Snake Country.

As Frederick Merk has pointed out, the Snake Country was a region of "ill-defined boundaries," centered about the Snake River. In 1818 much of it was still unexplored, and its fur resources were largely a matter of speculation. If the tracks of future Snake Country expeditions provide any criteria, it extended on the north to the Salmon River region, and even to the Flathead area and the Grand Tetons. On the east it spilled (illegally for the British) across the Rockies to the waters of the upper Missouri but more properly was confined by the Continental Divide and the valleys of the Green and Colorado rivers. It encompassed all of the Great Basin, and on one occasion a Snake expedition went as far south as the mouth of the Colorado. The region west of the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades was not considered part of the Snake Country, though it was traversed several times by members of Snake parties. Also, the Snake expeditions did not operate
north and west of the Columbia River. Truly, here was an empire ripe for awakening. 59

McKenzie left Fort Nez Percés late in September, 1818, with 55 men and 195 horses. No provisions were carried, since it was intended to live off the country. 60 He advanced to the Boise River, which he called the River Skam-am-naugh. 61 Having difficulties with the still-rebellious Iroquois hunters in his party, he left them to trap beaver along the Boise. It is probable that some of these men roamed eastward at least as far as Camas Creek and lower Big Wood River during the winter. 62 He and the rest of the party went eastward and southeastward, going as far as Bear River and probably even to Green River. This region proved rich in beaver, and both trapping and trading produced abundant yields. Evidently reluctant to give up the hunt during the winter — the season when furs were at their best — McKenzie left his party to trap at an unnamed location — possibly in the Great Basin — and returned with six Canadians to Fort Nez Percés. During the homeward journey he said he traveled along the base of the Rocky Mountains and through the upper Snake Country, covering more than 600 miles of the distance on snowshoes. 63

Despite having been exposed to hardships in the field for six months, McKenzie rested only seven days before starting back to the Snake Country. This time he and his six companions left by barge, since he wanted to test the possibility of supplying the field parties by boat navigation up the Snake River. His
experiences in the Grand Canyon of the Snake caused him to believe that the water route could be used but that it might be best "to continue the land transportation while the business in this quarter is carried on upon a small scale." In any case, he was forced to send the barge back, while he and two men set out on foot to cover the remaining distance to the Boise River. The time evidently was late April, 1819.

While at Fort Nez Percés, McKenzie had arranged for a new outfit of supplies and additional men to be sent to him in the Snake Country so that the entire expedition would not have to lose valuable time journeying to headquarters and then returning to the field. Not long after his departure from Walla Walla a party of fifteen men reached that place, having been sent to reinforce the Snake brigade. Alexander Ross, the clerk in charge of the post, added twenty-six men to this number and sent them off with supplies for McKenzie. The party was commanded by William Kittson, described by Ross as "an apprentice clerk from Canada, a novice in the country, but a smart fellow." After a trip marked by several clashes with Indian horse thieves, Kittson reached McKenzie on Boise River.

Promptly upon the delivery of the outfit, the fur returns from the previous winter's operations were loaded on his horses, and Kittson "bent his course" for Fort Nez Percés. Two men were lost in a battle with an Indian war party during the return journey, but he arrived with the precious cargo intact on
July 7, 1819. The exact value of this first major Snake fur harvest is not known, but Ross claimed it was large enough to give the company's western operations "a handsome surplus." After Kittson delivered his furs he and his men once more made the long trip to the Boise River, where he rejoined McKenzie. The combined party, numbering about seventy-five men, then embarked on McKenzie's "second adventure into the Snake country." Though several times dangerously threatened by hostile Indians, the hunters reached Bear Lake by early September, 1819. Since the natives of this area still were little acquainted with European goods and were unversed in relative values, the North Westers were able to conduct a brisk trade for pelts, which were acquired for ridiculously low prices. But as Ross remarked, the Snakes were "not deficient in acuteness," and this happy state of affairs could not be expected to continue for long.

McKenzie's exact route during the remainder of the winter hunt cannot be determined with certainty. There is some evidence that he may have visited the Grand Teton region and the sources of Green River. It is known, however, that he spent a considerable period in the foothills and mountain valleys on the northern border of the Snake River Plains. On February 16, 1820, one of his men, John Day, died on the banks of the present Little Lost River. Alexander Ross later noted that Thyrey Goddin, another member of the party, discovered the stream now called Big Lost River during the same year; and he also stated that
McKenzie and his party "fell on" what evidently was the present Big Wood River on his way home during the spring of 1820. 71

McKenzie, "in his leather jacket," returned to Fort Nez Percé with his party on June 22, 1820. He brought 154 horses loaded with beaver. Among the costs of this second Snake Expedition, however, were the lives of three Hawaiians murdered by Indians while trapping and of two additional men killed on Boise River when natives attacked and burned a "couple of buildings" erected there by Kittson. 72

Taking only twelve days to rest and refit, the indomitable McKenzie started on his third expedition to the Snake Country on July 4, 1820. With him were seventy men. 73 He remained in the field for more than a year, but nothing certain is known about his route. The great student of the fur trade, Dale Morgan, concluded that McKenzie hunted on the Green River at some time during 1820-1821. 74 He and his brigade returned to Fort Nez Percé on July 10, 1821. His returns were greater than those of the previous year, and he had not lost a man. 75 It has been estimated that the pelts from his three Snake Country expeditions amounted to "perhaps a quarter of the whole returns of the Columbia Department" for those years. 76

By the time he began to enjoy a well-earned rest at Walla Walla a great change had taken place in the affairs of the British fur trade and in the status of McKenzie himself, although he
probably was not aware of the new situation until somewhat later. During March, 1821, the North West Company had been merged into its great rival, the Hudson's Bay Company, and McKenzie had been taken into the latter firm as a chief factor, the highest grade of "commissioned gentlemen." How much his future actions were influenced by news of these events when it arrived is not known, but instead of returning to the Snake Country he remained at Fort Nez Percés over the winter and went "out" to Fort William during the spring of 1822. The Hudson's Bay Company quickly put to use his recognized ability as a conductor of trapping brigades by appointing him to head the projected Bow River expedition.

The major contributions made by Donald McKenzie to the development of the western fur trade have only been fully comprehended in recent years. He was the first to understand the great fur resources of the vast region lying between the Rockies on the east and the Blue Mountains, the Cascades, and the Sierra on the west. He and his men were working the Bear River and Green River valleys several years before Jedediah Smith and other American trappers arrived on the scene. His explorations along the Snake River resulted in a number of place names which are still in use.

But even more important were the innovations he instituted to exploit this often forbidding region. Although McKenzie did not originate the roving trapping party it was, as Dale Morgan has written, left to him "to demonstrate the real potential of the
trapping brigade." Unlike the Americans east of the Rockies, he realized that only strong parties could succeed in hostile Indian country, and he was quick to see that horses could be used on a large scale to transport supplies and furs in place of the boats which had been traditional in the trade. While not entirely adverse to fixed posts, he showed that mobile parties could often produce better results in both trading and trapping. The manner in which he kept his party in the field for two successive seasons by having supplies and reinforcements sent to him instead of his returning to the depot was a forerunner of the rendezvous system which became such a prominent feature of American trade in the Far West. It is not yet clear, however, that Ashley was imitating McKenzie or that he was even aware of the precedent when he organized his first rendezvous in 1825.79

And perhaps most important of all for the purposes of the present discussion, the Snake Country expedition which he had founded did not cease with McKenzie's departure from the scene. As an institution it continued for more than a decade and became a weapon in the international commercial and political struggle for control of the Oregon Country.

It must not be supposed that the trapping activities of the North West Company on the Pacific Slope were confined to the Snake Country. It is quite clear that the pioneering efforts made by the Astorians in the Willamette Valley, in the Cowlitz
region, and elsewhere were continued by their successors, even before the Fort William councils of 1815 and 1816 ordered a more vigorous expansion of operations "towards California and the mountains." Equally apparent, however, is the fact that these early hunts were on a small scale and conducted largely by freemen.

On February 17, 1814, Alexander Henry recorded the return to Fort George of four Iroquois who had "been up" the Owlitz River, north of the Columbia. These men reported finding plenty of beaver but that the continual rising and falling of the river level prevented success with traps. On March 25 a party arrived from the Willamette with twenty packs of beaver, "part collected by the natives and part by our men." A considerable number of freemen, a portion of them former Astorians, were also working on the Willamette. The most tantalizing of Henry's remarks concerning trapping, however, is found in his journal entry for March 29, 1814: "Arrangements made with J. Day, Carson, and other freemen, on halves for Spanish river." At that time "Spanish River" was the name generally given by the mountaineers to the Green or Colorado rivers, but it seems possible that in this instance it meant a real or rumored stream believed to lead to California. Unfortunately, nothing more concerning this projected expedition seems to have come to light.

By 1816 a more vigorous employment of trapping parties from Fort George was evident. In the fall of that year a brigade of
ten men was equipped to hunt on the Willamette River. As the group ascended the stream, the Indians demanded tribute for the privilege of hunting on tribal lands. When payment was refused, a battle ensued, resulting in the death of a chief. The Nor'Westers retreated to Fort George and, recorded Alexander Ross, "the project of hunting in the Wallamitte was relinquished for some time." 84

After an appropriate interval, a stronger party of twenty-five men and a clerk was sent to reestablish friendly relations with the natives and to reach the trapping grounds. By agreeing to pay compensation for the dead chief, the quarrel with the Indians was patched up, but the hunters were soon embroiled in a second conflict. This time three Indians were killed, and the North Westers escaped only by fleeing under the cover of darkness. "By the disaster of this trip," said Ross, "every avenue was for the present shut up against our hunters in the Wallamette direction." 85

Letting another interval pass, the North Westers sent experienced Alexander Ross at the head of forty-five men to treat once more with the Indians at Willamette Falls. This time the negotiations produced lasting results. The Indians agreed that the hunters should have free access to the Willamette Valley, and it is reported that they "faithfully and zealously observed the agreement for many years afterwards." 86

Indeed, all went well for a while. But evidently during the fall of 1818, as shall be noted in some detail later, the
North Westers were involved in another quarrel with the natives, this time on the Cowlitz River north of the Columbia. As a result, the trapping and trading parties which operated in that region had to be diverted to the Willamette where enough trappers and hunters were already employed. 87

Soon a large party of sixty men, in charge of two clerks, was sent to the very headwaters of the Willamette and then southwest into the basin of the Umpqua River. Operations in what appears to have been at least partly a new field started off well, and the beaver harvest was abundant. But then, just when affairs appeared most promising, unruly Iroquois hunters in the party massacred a number of inoffensive Indians. Fearing retaliation, not only the Umpqua party but all the trappers on the Willamette fled in panic to Fort George. 88

The Northwesters were unfortunate and inept in their relations with the Indians throughout the entire Columbia region, but once more they managed to conciliate the natives of the Willamette area. It is reliably reported that one of their clerks, Thomas McKay — tall, dark, and brave as a lion — was sent with a party during 1820 to explore the country beyond the Willamette headwaters. "Mr. Thomis McKay is doing well with his Band on the Welihamet," wrote one Nor'Wester to another on March 2, 1821. 89

Thus the North West Company at last found a man who could keep the southern frontier open for trapping. For even though
McKay's party had a clash with the natives, peace was restored, and the Hudson's Bay Company's Columbia Department manager was able to write in 1843 that "a good understanding" existed between the Willamette natives and the "whites" from "that time to this." 90

The Nor'Westers were not to have any such happy ending north of the Columbia, however. As has been seen, small parties of the company's hunters had been sent from Fort George to operate along the Cowlitz and probably elsewhere since at least late 1813. It appears to have been toward the end of 1818 or early the next year that an expedition of Iroquois Indians was dispatched to the "Cowlitz quarter" to hunt and trap. These undisciplined Eastern natives, who had been imported to the Columbia in increasing numbers as one of the 1815-1816 "reforms," ran true to form and soon began to "interfere" with the Cowlitz women. When the natives resisted, a battle broke out with the result that one Iroquois was killed and two wounded. The survivors abandoned their hunting ground and beat a hasty retreat to Fort George.

Not understanding that his own hunters were the aggressors, James Keith sent about fifty men, mostly Iroquois, to punish the "murderers." Before the clerk in charge could open negotiations with the natives, the Iroquois disobeyed orders and slaughtered twelve unsuspecting men, women, and children. Once more the North Westers had to retreat to Fort George. 91

Keith tried to mend matters early in 1819 by arranging a marriage between one of his clerks and the daughter of the Cowlitz
chief, but another unfortunate incident, in which the Cowlitz delegation was attacked at Fort George by the Chinooks, ended all possibility of reconciliation. From that time the North Westers largely ceased to send trappers north of the lower Columbia "as the Cowlitz could not be depended upon." Farther upstream, however, there were at least spasmodic attempts to trap in the vast region north and west of the river. Evidently somewhat after the Cowlitz debacle Alexander Ross, then in charge of Fort Nez Percés, sent a party of trappers from there towards the Yakima River. The men had not gone far before they were "frightened" by hostile natives and retreated to their base. "They were nevertheless," wrote Ross, "considering the short time they had been there very successful."

There seems to be no evidence that such a venture was ever repeated. But sometime about 1820 or early 1821 Peter Skene Ogden, in charge of Kamloops Post on the Thompson River in present British Columbia, is said to have sent a band of freemen up a northern branch of that stream. They returned after having gone only forty miles due to dissension in their ranks.

Such ventures seem to indicate that by the end of their sway on the Columbia the North Westers were employing trapping parties wherever prospects appeared promising as an almost routine instrument for increasing the returns of the department. A great change had taken place in the Columbia fur trade since 1813.
The Hudson's Bay Company takes the helm

After the merger of the North West Company into the Hudson's Bay Company early in 1821, the surviving firm looked forward to operating the trade in the Columbia Department with much hesitation. The business there had for several years been a losing proposition under the Nor'Westers. The Hudson's Bay Company's directors, the Governor and Committee in London, knew little about conditions west of the Rockies except what was revealed by the account books. In February, 1822, they told George Simpson, their chief officer in America, that they were "not sanguine" in their expectations of profits from the Columbia but if losses could be reduced considerably it might be desirable to hold the region as a buffer to keep rival traders from from the richer New Caledonia to the north. Simpson was instructed to gather all possible information concerning the region and, if the results were too discouraging, to consider whether the firm should withdraw northward.

The next several years, therefore, were marked by a lull in, but not a complete discontinuation of, trapping expeditions while the Company assessed its position on the Columbia and reorganized its operations. Some of the earliest information received from new personnel sent to the Pacific Slope related to the possibilities for an expansion of trapping activities.

Early in April, 1822, Chief Trader John Lee Lewes wrote to Governor Simpson from Fort George painting an optimistic picture of the prospects. "Immense tracks of Land to the North of Fort
George remain still unexplored, abounding as I am given to understand with Beaver," he announced. He also called Simpson's attention to the Snake Country, which also offered opportunities for further exploitation. 98 A year later Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy reported from Spokane House that the Snake Country was "the Source from which we draw the Major part of our Returns despite the fact that the freemen were "so indolent and careless, that often after they have been at the trouble of procuring Furs at the risk of their Lives, they are too lazy to come in with them and the Consequence is that their Furs are either lost or damaged before they reach this place."99 Soon after this letter was written, word reached Governor Simpson at Norway House that Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron at Fort George had made "repeated attempts to extend the trade "along the Coast to the Northward, a tract ascertained to abound in Furs, but without success on account of the implacable revenge of the natives for a supposed outrage committed on them by the Whites some years ago."100

Such reports, along with others concerning both additional commercial and the political aspects of the Columbia trade, soon convinced the Governor and Committee that retreat would be unwise. By early 1824 it was clear to the directors that rival national claims to the Oregon Country would for years not prevent the Company from operating north toward Russian Alaska or south and east of the Columbia. 101 The directors now turned their thoughts to getting the most from the region. For example, on March 12,
1824, they told Governor Simpson: "we think the trade should be extended in the Snake Country, and also along the Coast to the Northward." 102

Vigorous new programs did not effectively get under way, however, until dynamic, hard-driving Governor Simpson visited the Columbia late in 1824. By the time he returned east the next spring the district had been thoroughly reorganized, and measures had been initiated to push operations on land and sea to an extent never achieved by the North Westers. While most of Governor Simpson's reforms, such as the drastic reduction in the number of employees west of the mountains and the great emphasis on making the district self-sufficient in food, at least indirectly influenced future trapping activities, only those with an immediate bearing on our subject can be noted here.

There is no evidence that Governor Simpson ever questioned the need for large-scale trapping by Europeans in the Columbia region, but if he had any doubts they quickly vanished. He learned for himself what the Astorians and the Nor'Westers had long since discovered -- that many of the native groups west of the Rockies were not enthusiastic or efficient beaver hunters. While descending the Columbia during October, 1824, he observed that the Indians about Kettle Falls were "perfectly independent of us for any necessary," contenting themselves with gathering a "few Skins" annually to purchase "the trifling articles of British Manufacture they require," largely arms and tobacco. 103
Farther downstream, at Fort Nez Percés, he learned that trade with the local Cayuse and other tribes netted only about 2000 beaver pelts annually. "It does not appear to me," he wrote in his journal, "that there is a prospect of any considerable increase unless trappers are introduced as the Indians cannot be prevailed on to exert themselves in hunting." 104

The Governor found the same "indolent and lazy" habits to prevail among most of the lower Columbia tribes. Having little need of the Company's goods, they "merely" took "the trouble of looking after a few Beaver (which is considered a wonderful exertion) to supply themselves with Tobacco Beads Guns and Ammunition." 105 Simpson was particularly disgusted with the powerful Chinooks who lived at the mouth of the Columbia. They were, he said, "a Nation of Traders and not Hunters." 106 He complained that they could not "be roused into habits of activity," meaning that they would not hunt for furs to trade to the Company. 107

But the desire to increase fur returns was not Simpson's only reason for wishing to expand trapping operations. During his visit to the Columbia he was horrified to note the large cost of the superfluous employees at several posts, particularly Fort George; and he was determined that these men should be put usefully to work until they could be shipped back across the mountains or, if retained, during periods when their services were not urgently required for manning boats or other duties. 108
The freemen who hung about Flathead Post and a few other stations were another thorn in the Company's side. The "Little Emperor" was anxious to get them also off on trapping expeditions.

Perhaps to most urgent motive, however, was the desire to thwart the Americans both economically and politically in the Oregon Country. Under the Convention of 1818 the entire region was open to trade and settlement by both the United States and Great Britain, but by early 1824 it was evident that the most Britain could hope for when a final boundary was drawn was to retain the area north and west of the Columbia River. The southern and eastern portion (at least south of 490) was sure to fall to the United States eventually. British and Company policy, therefore, was to protect and strengthen their position north of the Columbia and to delay as long as possible the advance of the Americans into the rest of Oregon. The Company was the chief agent for implementing this policy.

As early as 1822 Governor Simpson had anticipated that American trappers based on St. Louis would invade the Snake Country. He was also keen enough to see that these fur hunters would open the way for settlers. Thus competition in the Snake Country would not only decrease profits from that region but would bring Americans within striking distance of the area the Company most wished to protect.

Simpson's counter measure, and that of the London directors,
as well, was a determination to trap the region south and east of the Columbia to the exhaustion of its fur resources while that area was still open to the British. Maximizing profits was a consideration in reaching this decision, but the impelling motive was the desire to make this vast area so unproductive for the Americans that they would not cross it. In short, a "scorched earth" policy was to be carried out in order to create a buffer against commercial competition which would surely lead to political rivalry north of the river. Simpson also saw that increased yields from south of the Columbia would permit him to institute conservation measures in the over-trapped regions east of the mountains.

For all of these reasons, Simpson appears to have developed a considerable enthusiasm for trapping expeditions. At one point during his visit he expressed his conviction that staffs of posts should be reduced and that some stations should even be abandoned, "as we can turn the Services of our officers & men to better account in many other parts of the Country even by outfitting them as trappers."

Simpson wasted no time in giving effect to his convictions. As shall be seen later in some detail, he reorganized the Snake Country expeditions during his journey down the Columbia and placed them under the charge of a strong leader. At Fort George he directed that a large expedition of supernumerary employees and freemen be sent on a year-long trapping expedition up the
Willamette Valley, across to the Umpqua, and thence "to the Banks of the Rio Colorado." He also planned to send a second expedition southward from Fort George in the summer of 1825, composed of the crews of the boat brigades from the interior.

Turning his attention to the situation north of the river, he was shocked to learn that due to native hostility the firm's employees at Fort George considered it "the height of insanity" to attempt to send trappers in that direction. Simpson determined to test this belief. Only eleven days after his arrival at Fort George he sent a strong party under Chief Trader James McIllan to explore northward as far as Fraser River. When the expedition returned with reports that the country "abounded" in beaver and that the Indians were friendly, the way had been opened for hunting in the Cowlitz region and beyond. On his way back up the Columbia during April, 1825, Simpson was impressed with the "large quantities of Beaver Cuttings" observed on the upper reaches beyond Kettle Falls. "I . . . am satisfied," he noted in his journal, "that if a party of 20 good Trappers would pass a year in this neighborhood and employ their time well they would make good hunts."

Simpson thus contemplated or actually set in motion trapping expeditions over a broad range of the Columbia District. In a review such as this it is impossible to follow the course of every Company hunting party which roamed over this vast district during the course of the next thirty years. Only the general
outline can be noted, with emphasis on the two main expeditions -- the Snake Brigade and the Southern Brigade.

The remainder of the paper will be divided into sections as follows: (1) the Snake Country expeditions; (2) the Southern parties; (3) miscellaneous trapping activities; and (4) the organization, operating techniques, and personnel of the typical British fur brigade. In the first two of these sections an attempt will be made to list the principal expeditions with a summary of the route and accomplishments of each. No secondary account, however, can have the impact and interest of an original eye-witness narrative. Thus wherever possible references will be given to the printed journals of the most important expeditions so that readers may gain the appreciation of the hardships and perils experienced by the trappers and achieve an understanding of the daily routine which can come only from reading the primary sources.

The Snake Expeditions under the Hudson's Bay Company

After the return of Donald McKenzie to Fort Nez Percés in July, 1821, and following the merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company during that same year, there was, as Paul Phillips has pointed out, "a pause in the fur trade of the interior." In fact McKenzie's old foe on the Columbia, James Keith, described the Snake Country as "lately abandoned" in a letter to the new firm's London directors on February 22, 1822.
He considered this branch of the trade as "too casual & contingent to be relied on," seemingly recommending that it be given up except for one more "communication" with that region. This probably not unprejudiced advice may have been at least partly responsible for the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company gave little attention to the Snake Country for a year or two after the coalition, but the firm's Governor and Committee were generally pessimistic over the prospects of the entire Columbia trade and few forward steps were taken anywhere in the district while its possibilities were being investigated.

But even though activity in the Snake Country slowed after mid 1821 it did not cease entirely. As Dale Morgan has pointed out, "the trappers who had composed the Snake brigade went right on eating, and if they were not out hunting beaver, they ate horseflesh and still more expensive fare at the Company's posts on credit." Trapping in the Snake Country had proved to be an extremely hazardous and unpleasant occupation, and no Company officer came forward to take McKenzie's place. Yet the cost of the idle hunters could no longer be tolerated, so in the spring of 1822 a party of Iroquois and other freemen was sent out to the Snake Country under the command of Michel Bourdon, a steady and experienced young man who had been with McKenzie in 1818-1819.

Bourdon's party did not leave from Fort Nez Percés as had past Snake expeditions beginning in 1818. Evidently it took its
departure from Flathead Post, a small station on Clarks Fork of the Columbia near Thompson Falls in the present Montana. Flathead was a subpost of Spokane House, and therefore the latter post became the "headquarters" of the Snake Country expeditions for the next several years.

The reasons for this shift in the brigade's base are not clear. Flathead was much farther from the Snake Country than Walla Walla, although it did offer an easier route to the less heavily trapped eastern reaches of the region and to the upper Missouri area which, though United States territory and thus not legally open to British traders, was a rich beaver ground and provided the only practicable road southward to the Snake. In addition, it appears that parties of freemen had been operating annually from Flathead Post for some years.\textsuperscript{124}

Little is known about Bourdon's expedition, but presumably he crossed and then recrossed the Continental Divide to reach Henry's Fork, the main Snake River, the Blackfoot River, and Bear Lake. The journey was marked by several clashes with those scourges of the Snake Country, the Blackfeet. Two men were killed during these skirmishes, and Bourdon lost fourteen more through desertion. The survivors made their way back to Spokane House, where they arrived on September 13, 1822. The trappers had collected 2200 beaver pelts, but 700 of the skins remained in the Snake Country.\textsuperscript{125}
While Bourdon was in the field, the Council for the Northern Department, meeting at York Factory on Hudson Bay during June, 1822, turned its attention to the Snake Country. Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy was appointed to the Columbia District and ordered to take up his winter residence at Spokane House. He was "empowered" to hire Michel Bourdon as a "Conductor of Trappers" at the "lowest rate for which he may agree."126

When Kennedy reached Spokane House that fall he found that the situation required stronger measures than the council had contemplated. "The Snake Country," he reported to Governor Simpson, "is the Source from which we draw the Major part of our Return," and thus operations there should no longer be left largely in the hands of the unreliable freemen. In addition, he was anxious to recover the 700 skins Bourdon had left behind, evidently en cache at a place called Fort Providence. What was more, a party of freemen and their families had crossed the mountains to Spokane House from the Saskatchewan and was passing the winter in idleness at Flathead Post. Kennedy was anxious to get these people off his hands and profitably employed so they could pay their debts to the Company.127

Kennedy therefore placed veteran clerk Finan McDonald in charge of an expedition which was to leave Flathead Post in the spring of 1823. He was to be accompanied by five engagés (Company employees) as well as by Michel Bourdon and at least forty-five freemen. Some of the freemen were to bring in the
furs at Fort Providence and then return to their companions with supplies so that the expedition could remain in the field through the winter, the season when beaver pelts were at their prime. McKenzie's innovation had not been forgotten. McDonald himself, however, was to return during the fall of 1823 to take charge of Flathead Post for the winter and to bring in the furs collected during the summer.

McDonald seems to have left no journal of his 1823 expedition, so his exact route cannot be traced with certainty. Undoubtedly the party took the traditional route from Flathead southeastward to the site of the present Missoula. From there McDonald probably ascended Clark's Fork and continued on to the Big Hole, where one of the men, a mixed-blood named Thomas Anderson, was killed during a parley with the Piegans. Crossing to the Beaverhead and then traversing Lemhi Pass westward across the Continental Divide, the trappers fell into a Blackfoot ambush soon after beginning their descent to the Lemhi River.

Instead of retreating, McDonald and his companions laid siege to the thicket where the Indians were hidden and finally set it on fire. Of seventy-five Blackfeet only seven escaped, and as McDonald later wrote, the survivors "had not a British Clout to Cover them selves." The trappers lost six of their number, including "Poore" Michel Bourdon. Four years later Peter Skene Ogden still regretted the loss of this "most valuable" employee who was even then unequaled in the Columbia for his experience
with trappers, knowledge of Indians, and acquaintance with the Snake Country.  131

In the words of McDonald, this encounter did indeed show the bloodthirsty Blackfeet "what war was."  132 As Dale Morgan has pointed out, this was the only large-scale pitched battle the Hudson's Bay Company ever was required to fight in the Snake Country. For several years Blackfoot war parties ranging the region refrained from attacks on both British and American trappers except when murders of small groups could be accomplished without danger.  133

After crossing to the western side of the Continental Divide McDonald went south to the Snake River and then on to Bear River. Ascending the latter stream, he went east into the Green River Valley. From there he turned northward and once more crossed the divide to the upper waters of the Missouri. He followed that stream down to Great Falls, thus going farther east on American soil than any other British Snake Country expedition.

McDonald probably returned to Flathead Post, but if so he soon moved to Spokane House, where Alexander Ross found him and "all" his men late in October, 1823.  134 Evidently the plan to leave the free hunters out all winter had been abandoned. McDonald's returns amounted to 4739 beaver. Dale Morgan believed this was "perhaps the best hunt" that had ever been made in the Snake Country.  135 But McDonald, courageous giant that he was, had had enough of the region. "I got Safe home from the Snake Country,"
he wrote to a friend, "and when that Cuntre will see me agane the Beaver will have Gould Skin."  

It must have been with considerable relief, then, that he received the news brought in by the Company's fall express from the East. On advice received from the chief factors on the Columbia, Governor Simpson had decided meanwhile that the Snake expedition should be placed on a more regular footing. During July, 1823, he arranged for the Council of the Northern Department to appoint a vigorous and highly competent former Nor'wester, Chief Trader Peter Skene Ogden, to the command of the Spokane House District. Ogden was instructed to send an expedition to the Snake Country in the spring of 1824 under the charge of Clerk Alexander Ross. Eight additional employees were to be supplied to strengthen the party.

If the news of these appointments pleased McDonald, it was not welcomed by Ross. He had come to the Columbia with the first Astorians, and most of his inland experience had been at the bleak and uncomfortable posts of Fort Okanogan and Nez Percés. In the fall of 1823 his term of employment with the Hudson's Bay Company was at an end, and he was happily in the process of moving himself and his family eastward across the Rockies when he received Simpson's letter offering him the management of the Snake Expedition for three years at a salary of £120 per year. With some reluctance he accepted.
Ross had never been to the Snake Country, but he had been in charge of Fort Nez Percé during the period of McKenzie's expeditions and thus had a good, if secondhand, knowledge of the region. In the spring of 1823 he had sent Simpson a "statement" concerning the trade there, and undoubtedly this plus the recommendations of several officers who had served with him on the Columbia were responsible for his selection. And in truth he was a conscientious and able employee, but he took over his command under three major handicaps. First, he was disgruntled that the journey was to begin from Flathead Post and not from Fort Nez Percé as he had expected and as he believed was proper. Second, by the time he reached his main hunting grounds American trappers had entered the area. This competition spelled trouble on several counts, not the least of which was that anticipated by Governor Simpson when he instructed Ross's superiors during July, 1823, to warn him "against opening a road for the Americans" into the Company's main trading areas. Third, nearly three-fifths of his party consisted of Indians, and half of those were the notoriously fickle and disaffected Iroquois and other Eastern natives. Under the circumstances a much stronger man than Ross might well have failed to achieve all that was expected of him.

Ross left Flathead House on February 10, 1824. His force, when completely assembled later that day at nearby Horse Plains, numbered eleven enragés and forty-three freemen, giving a total force, including himself, of fifty-five men. He viewed his companions with some misgivings. "There are many of these people too old for
a long Voyage," he noted in his journal. Of the seventeen French Canadians, five were over sixty years old, and two were over seventy. He admitted that the twelve Iroquois were in general good hunters, but he considered them faithless conspirators, "always at variance with the whites . . . too fond of Indians and of trafficking away their property with the Natives." The nineteen non-Iroquis Indians were, he believed, only of use in caring for the horses. Thus he did not expect to have more than twenty trappers available at any time. In addition to the men, the party included twenty-five women and sixty-four children. The equipment included seventy-five guns, a brass three-pounder, 212 beaver traps, 392 horses, plus a good supply of ammunition and a moderate stock of trade goods. 142

Ross took the usual route of the Flathead hunters to the site of the present Missoula, and then he moved southward up the Bitterroot River to a "small mountain prairie" still known as Ross's Hole. Here he was snowbound for a month, but eventually he was able to beat a way through the snow over Gibbon Pass to the Big Hole region. Using the route of Bourdon and McDonald over Lemhi Pass he descended into the Salmon River drainage of the present Idaho. Here, on the Lemhi River, he decided not to continue in the tracks of his predecessors but to make for the southern Snake country by a route "virtually unknown to the whites" where, as he said, the mountains were "lofty and abrupt." 143 Descending to the main Salmon River, he made camp at a place he called
"Canoe Point" -- perhaps at the present Salmon City but probably at the junction of the Salmon and Pahsimeroi Rivers.

After scouting parties in the directions of Little Lost River and the Boise River reported finding few beaver, Ross decided to follow the advice of a Snake Indian slave who was a member of the expedition. A great deal of effort and much time was lost beating about the rugged Salmon River Mountains north and west of the present Challis until the trappers were convinced they had been deceived. The slave barely escaped with his life.

Disgusted with prospects to the west, Ross turned southward to the Lost River country where McKenzie had met success in 1819 and 1820. Blackfoot war parties caused several alarms and one disagreeable incident in which two trappers were robbed of their horses and all their equipment, but there were no major clashes. The Iroquois under Ross’s command evidently believed that the thrashing McDonald had given the Piegans would assure the safety of a relatively small party, for they badgered Ross for permission to go off on a hunt by themselves. They believed they could take more beaver by not remaining with the large main brigade. Ross reluctantly agreed on June 11, and twelve men led by the famous fur-trade character, "Old Pierre" Tevanitagon, were detached the next day to hunt on Henrys Fork, in Pierre's Hole (named for Tevanitagon and now known as Teton Valley) near the Grand Tetons, and then south along the Snake, Blackfoot, and Portneuf Rivers.
The Iroquois were to rejoin the main party at "the fork" or near the Three Buttes, on September 25.  

After parting from the Iroquois Ross ascended Big Lost River to its head and crossed the divide westward to Big Wood River at the present Ketchum. Thus he apparently was the discoverer of the Trail Creek route to Sun Valley. Beaver were abundant in this virgin hunting ground, and his men worked down the stream until the fluctuating height of the water made trapping unprofitable. Then Ross went west by way of Camas Creek and the Boise River as far as the Payette and Weiser Rivers. This long western swing proved highly successful, producing 1855 beaver pelts.

On his return journey to rendezvous with his Iroquois, Ross trapped along Big Wood River again, this time to its source, and on September 18 crossed the ridge at or near the present Galena Summit. While on the divide he climbed a neighboring peak which he named "Mount Simpson." From it he had a splendid view of the Sawtooth Range. After descending the north side of the ridge he reached the main Salmon River, probably by following the East Fork but possibly by way of Sawtooth Valley and Stanley Basin (Ross's rather vague geographical descriptions have given rise to differences of opinion among authorities). Then, with much hardship due to steep canyon walls, he descended Salmon River to "Canoe Camp." Scouts were sent southward to find the Iroquois while the main
party moved on — either to the Lemhi Valley or to the open region about the Pahsimeroi and Little Lost Rivers — to trap and to gather buffalo meat for the homeward journey.\textsuperscript{148}

On October 14 one of the scouting parties returned bringing with them the long-absent Iroquois. Ross was dismayed. The eastern natives were, in his words, "trapless and beaverless, naked and destitute of almost everything."\textsuperscript{149} South of the Snake Old Pierre and his companions had, they said, gotten into a quarrel with a band of Snake Indians over a woman and a horse. The Snakes "fell on" them and robbed them of 900 beaver, 54 traps, 5 guns, 27 horses, and most of their clothing. Ross blamed this disaster on the Iroquois, claiming they had "passed the time with the Indians and neglected their hunts" ever since they had left the main party.\textsuperscript{150} But as Dale Morgan has pointed out, Ross himself probably was the real cause of the incident, since a dispute he had with the Snakes while he was in the western reaches of the country so enraged the Indians that they took vengeance on the first small band of trappers they encountered.\textsuperscript{151}

In the long run the important result of this affair for the Hudson's Bay men was not the loss of the pelts upon which Ross had counted to make his expedition an outstanding success but the fact that the Iroquois brought into camp with them seven American trappers under the command of Jedediah Smith. Smith was the Ashley and Henry employee who earlier that year had made the
effective discovery of South Pass and had opened for the Americans the rich beaver grounds of the Green River Valley. After taking his returns back east across South Pass and sending them on their way to St. Louis, he had once more crossed the Continental Divide with the intention of making a fall hunt as far as the waters of the Columbia. He was engaged in this project when he came across Ross's destitute Iroquois near the present Blackfoot, Idaho. The British trappers begged the Americans to protect them and escort them to the rendezvous point. For this service and, evidently, for horse hire, ammunition, and a few gewgaws, the Iroquois traded all 105 beaver pelts they had managed to keep from the Snakes.

Ross was shocked by the presence of the Americans. He at once grasped the significance of the event -- the British no longer had a monopoly over the interior fur trade of the Far West. He suspected that at least some of Bourdon's deserters in 1822 had reached American posts in the upper Missouri drainage with "much fur" and that Smith and his men were "spies" sent to encourage more desertions and to assess the resources of the region. And, indeed, word of the prices paid by the Americans for beaver skins immediately had "a very great influence" upon Ross's hunters. Smith told Ross that many more Americans would swarm into the Snake Country the next year -- a disquieting thought indeed. But Ross's greatest concern at the moment must have been aroused when Smith announced that he and his men would
follow the Hudson's Bay party back to Flathead Post. Ross realized that permitting such an action would place him in direct violation of Simpson's order not to open a road for the Americans. But there was little he could do. After all, citizens of the United States were free to roam and hunt wherever they wished in the Oregon Country.  

Two days later, on October 16, Ross rushed off an express to Ogden at Spokane House, and at about the same time the combined parties set out for Flathead. Crossing either Lemhi Pass or nearby Bannock Pass — once again historians differ — on October 28 and Gibbon Pass on November 1, the caravan followed down the Bitterroot and returned by the regular route to Flathead Post, where it arrived on November 26, 1824.  

Ross was quite pleased with his results. He had brought back nearly 5000 beaver pelts, 561 more than McDonald had harvested the previous year. This yield, he boasted, was "the most profitable ever brought from the Snake country in one year." What was more, he had avoided major battles with the Blackfeet, and his loss of horses was moderate.  

It must have been a considerable blow, therefore, when on November 27 Peter Skene Ogden, who had arrived at Flathead Post the day before from Spokane House, handed him a note from Governor Simpson relieving him from the command of the Snake Expedition and directing him to take charge of Flathead Post for the winter and then to return East in the spring to manage the school at
Red River. With his usual tact or perhaps duplicity, however, Simpson accomplished this "kick upstairs" without alienating Ross's friendship.157

Simpson's motives in relieving Ross are still somewhat obscure. The Council for the Northern Department had reappointed him to the Snake Country in July, 1824.158 But upon Simpson's arrival at Spokane House on October 28 during his inspection tour of the Columbia District he very quickly decided that Ross was a "self sufficient empty headed man" who had not the "talent" to provide the "very superior management" required to control the freemen of the Snake Brigade. By that time Ross's express of October 16 from north of the Snake Plain may have reached Spokane, since Simpson knew from Ross by at least October 30 that the expedition's returns amounted to more than 4000 beaver.159 Although the governor admitted that these results were "respectable" and must have been pleased that no men and few horses were lost to the Blackfeet, he seized upon the fact that Ross's reports were "so full of bombast and marvellous nonsense that it is impossible to get any information that can be depended on from him."160 Whether Simpson knew at that time that Smith and his Americans were to accompany Ross to Flathead is still undetermined. If Simpson did know, the relief of Ross undoubtedly would have followed no matter how well the clerk had performed or how clear his reports.

Probably the primary reason for the change of command,
however, came from information the governor had gathered from his chief factors and chief traders who had served in the Columbia. By the time he had been at Spokane for a day or two he had determined that the Snake Country could yield "handsome profits" if properly managed, and he had realized that the region was one "which for political reasons we should endeavor to destroy as fast as possible." In other words, he had formulated his "fur desert" policy. To carry it out he needed a stronger man than Ross. He wanted a "Commissioned Gentleman" of courage, determination, and experience who could command the respect of his unruly crew.

Simpson did not have to look far to find such a man. Chief Trader Peter Skene Ogden was immediately at hand. He was a former North West Company partner who had demonstrated his toughness and efficiency in the long struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company prior to 1821. Ogden probably was not pleased when Simpson offered him, on the spot, "the most hazardous and disagreeable office in the Indian Country," but he was in no position to refuse, since the governor had been largely responsible for getting him into the Company after the coalition.

Ogden was directed to go at once to Flathead Post, to meet Ross's incoming party, to re-outfit it, and to proceed promptly "direct for the heart of the Snake country towards the Banks of the Spanish River or Rio Colorado pass the Winter & Spring there and hunt their way out by the Umpqua and Wilhamet Rivers to Fort George next summer sufficiently early to send the returns home.
by the Ship." Simpson had decided that the usual practice of
the Flathead freemen of remaining idle at Flathead Post during
the winter meant that furs were not gathered when in their
prime and also was costly in increased debts for food, ammunition,
and horses consumed while the men lazied about. Ogden was also
permitted to increase his party by fifteen Company employees and
thirty to forty additional horses. 162

Another idea Simpson developed for the Snake Expedition at
this time proved not to be practicable. He rejected suggestions,
probably emanating from Ross, that the Snake Brigade should be
based on Fort Nez Percé as formerly. He admitted that the
distance to the interior would be shorter from that post, but he
was afraid that the powerful Nez Percé Indians would eventually
cause trouble if disturbed by the comings and goings of the
trappers. Instead, he proposed to outfit the expeditions from
Fort George -- a pipe dream which experience soon dispelled. 163

Ogden arrived at Flathead Post with the Snake Expedition
outfit on November 26, 1824. Ross's party came in later that
same day, and refitting was soon under way. On December 11
Clerk William Kittson joined the expedition from Kootenai House
as second in command. He was an experienced Snake Country hand,
having been with McKenzie in 1819-1820. All was ready by-
December 20, and on that day the party left Flathead to start,
in the words of Kittson who knew whereof he spoke, "our long
and dangerous journey." 164
Ogden's first Snake Expedition, Ross noted in the Flathead journal, was "the most formidable party that has ever set out for the Snakes." Contemporary figures differ somewhat, thus making an exact estimate difficult, but it appears that the brigade consisted of the two "gentlemen" leaders, eleven engagés or Company employees, forty-six freemen, thirty women, and thirty-five children, a number which was increased by at least two infants born during the journey. The party was equipped with 61 guns, 268 horses, and 352 traps. Tagging along at some distance to the rear were Jedediah Smith and his six Americans who were permitted to associate with the expedition for their own protection while traversing the region of greatest danger from the Blackfeet, although Ogden was not pleased to have this competition dogging his heels and taking in all the details of the British trade. Nevertheless, he expected to take a record 14,000 beaver before he reached Fort George. The route was that of previous expeditions from Flathead: via Hells Gate near the present Missoula, up the Bitterroot, and over Gibbon Pass to the Big Hole country. Ogden's qualities of leadership were well demonstrated by his future career with the Company, but in 1824 he was inexperienced in the ways of the Snake Country freemen. By the time he reached the Big Hole he had a good idea of what he was up against. From very early in the trip the freemen had shown a reluctance to guard the horses, either the Company's or their own. Whenever chance offered, they
traded away their ammunition to the Indians and lost crucial supplies on horse races with the natives. Before he had been on the trail a week, Ogden had learned to call them "thoughtless wretches." While still in the Big Hole region the freemen, despite the poor condition of their horses, could not resist the temptation to charge after a herd of buffalo. Thirty of the mighty beasts were killed, but only the meat of three was brought into camp. Ogden was disgusted by this "Sinful waste" of food and ammunition. A few days later twenty-six of the freemen's horses, left unguarded, were run off by Indians. Only nine were recovered. The men were somewhat chastened by this experience, since some of them had to walk as a result, but Ogden's hope that they had learned a lesson was short lived.170

These same types of difficulties had plagued the Snake expeditions since their onset. Party leaders and Company officers for years had blamed the troubles on the irresponsible and dissolute natures of the freemen. "There cannot be a better test for knowing the worthless and bad character in this country than his wishing to become a freeman; it is a true sign of depravity," wrote Alexander Ross.171 Governor Simpson was even more scathing. The Snake Expedition freemen he said in 1824 were "the very scum of the country and generally outcasts from the Service for misconduct" and constituted "the most unruly and troublesome gang to deal with in this or perhaps any other part of the World."172
Ogden fully seconded these views at the outset of his first expedition.

But there was much more to the matter than mere perverseness. Freemen earned their living by selling, or rather bartering, their furs they trapped to the traders. Under both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company the prices paid for furs were not much higher than those given to Indians. Before the hunters could leave for the wilds, however, they had to equip themselves with horses, traps, ammunition, and a few other necessities, to say nothing of trinkets for native women. Then there was the food and liquor consumed at the fur posts between journeys. For this equipment and supplies the freemen were charged high prices, though not necessarily exorbitant prices in view of the great cost of transporting the goods to the frontiers. As a result, the freemen were almost perpetually in debt. If anything, the situation had grown worse after the coalition, since Simpson was obsessed with the goal of increasing profits and set prices accordingly. As long as the British maintained a monopoly over the interior fur trade, the freemen could expect little improvement in their lot.

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that the freemen felt little loyalty to the Company and that they would rather hunt buffalo and chase after Indian girls than perform such unpleasant tasks as guarding horses and beating tracks through deep snow. These wilderness wanderers generally took
their debts lightly and felt little compunction about breaking away to join friendly natives to hunt on their own. After all, they had little to lose.

With the appearance of American traders and trappers in the Snake Country, the freemen glimpsed an opportunity to improve their lot. The Yankees were paying much more for beaver than the British. The Company's field officers were quick to grasp the danger. After Jedediah Smith's band joined his party in the fall of 1824, Alexander Ross noted in his journal: "The report of these men on the price of beaver [at American posts] has a very great influence on our trappers." Ogden's freemen thus had an added motive for their recalcitrance, and he was not long in suffering the consequences.

On February 11, 1825, the expedition and its American followers crossed Lemhi Pass and descended to the Lemhi River, a tributary of the westward flowing Salmon. Buffalo were plentiful along the Lemhi, but the grass was soon exhausted, and the horses grew weak. Ogden wished to continue southward to the Snake River, but deep snow on the intervening divide and the condition of the horses held him in the Lemhi region for more than a month. The beaver here had been almost exhausted by Ross's hunters the year before, and the freemen were discontented as a result. Pleading the poor condition of their horses, they refused to agree to Ogden's proposal to move to the Snake by Ross's route of 1824.

Finally, on March 19, the seven Americans left camp for an
attempt to reach the Snake. Evidently Ogden feared these rivals would skim the cream from the pool of beaver if they worked the hunting grounds first, so on March 23, after a scouting party had reported the way southward to be practicable, he once more got the expedition in motion even though to do so might mean the "sacrifice of the horses." Traveling by way of Little Lost River and then across the Great Snake Plain, Snake River was reached on April 6. 176

Here the British came up with Jedediah Smith's men who, as Ogden had apprehended, had found good beaver hunting. But the Americans were out of supplies and were forced to trade one hundred pelts to Ogden at the high freemen's prices. This need of American trappers, particularly those in small parties, to fall back upon the Hudson's Bay Company for ammunition and other goods was to be repeated a number of times in future years and was one reason for the eventual British domination of the trade.

While Ogden was still on the Snake Blood Indians attacked a detached party of his hunters and killed one man, Antoine Benoit. After burying their fallen companion "in a beaver dam," the expedition ascended the Blackfoot River, which flows northward into the Snake. 177 The Americans took the same route, and for the next few days the two parties played a game of leapfrog, each attempting to keep ahead in order to harvest the most furs. Due to heavy snow, Ogden crossed to the Portneuf River and then made his way southward to the great bend of the Bear River.
En route the Blackfeet made away with twenty horses. One was recovered, but the loss was still a disaster. The freemen were thoroughly discouraged and announced their intention of abandoning the hunt. It took all of Ogden's powers of persuasion and command to prevent the disintegration of his party.

On Bear River Ogden parted from Smith, the Americans going upstream while he turned downstream into a region never before trapped by the British. A group of Snakes encountered on May 4 informed him that a party of twenty-five Americans was ahead of him—bad news indeed. "If this be true," Ogden wrote in his journal, "it will be a fatal blow to our expectations." The prophecy was only too true but for a different reason than Ogden, who had been thinking of the loss of beaver pelts, had anticipated.

The British were then in Cache Valley, and they continued southward to the present Ogden Valley. Trapping was excellent in this region east of Great Salt Lake where they were the pioneer hunters. Some of the men glimpsed the lake from a distance, but Ogden did not see it personally in 1825. In any case, this inland sea had already been discovered by American trappers, perhaps by Jim Bridger.

Ogden's brief interlude of happy hunting and high returns came to an end on May 22 when one of his trappers came into camp accompanied by two men who had deserted from Bourdon's party in 1822. They said they were among the survivors of a group which had been outfitted by Missouri and New Mexico traders. Thus,
Taos, they said, was only a fifteen-day march away. Ogden gained the impression that the whole country was "overrun" with Americans and Canadians. Later that day he moved his camp a few miles south to the Weber River Valley, near the present Mountain Green, Utah.¹⁷⁹ This was the southernmost point reached by Ogden's first expedition.

Early the next day the two deserters returned, bringing with them the remainder of their party, which was commanded by Etienne Provost. This group was soon joined by another, which advanced toward the camp with the United States flag flying. Much to Ogden's surprise, fourteen of his own men who had been out hunting were in the company. The rest were twenty-five Americans headed by Johnson Gardner. The Americans wasted no time in informing Ogden's men that they were on United States soil and therefore, "indebted or engaged," were all free of any obligations to the Hudson's Bay Company. They offered to buy all furs offered at $3.50 a pound, about eight times the Company's rate. What was more, they agreed to sell goods "cheap in proportion."¹⁸⁰

The next morning Gardner came to Ogden's lodge and declared that the region had been ceded to the United States and that since the British had no license to trap or trade they must leave or they would be driven out by military force. Ogden replied, quite correctly, that the boundary question had not been settled and that he would withdraw when he received orders from his own government to do so. Gardner was merely bluffing, since nothing
had changed the status of the "joint occupation" agreement of 1818, although diplomatic negotiations to attempt to bring about a final division of the Oregon Country would be set in motion later in the year. As a matter of fact, Gardner was a trespasser on Mexican soil, although he undoubtedly did not realize it. The Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819 between the United States and Spain had established the forty-second parallel as the northern limit of Spanish -- and hence Mexican -- claims in the Far West; and the Weber River Valley was well south of that line. But Ogden was not, at least to British eyes, an interloper, since Britain was not a party to the 1819 compact and since the Hudson's Bay Company maintained that Spain, by a convention of 1790, had restricted her claims to "what she at that time held in actual settlement."

Gardner and his Americans played upon the pent up resentment of the freemen, telling them that the Company treated them as slaves. The upshot of the matter was that over the next several days twenty-three of Ogden's men deserted, taking with them about 700 beaver skins and a number of horses. Only two or three (accounts differ) of the deserters paid their debts before leaving; the rest blithely walked away from their "heavy" indebtedness. Badly outnumbered by the Americans, who assisted and protected the deserters, Ogden could do little to stem the tide.

On May 25, 1825, Ogden raised camp at "Deserter Point" and started to backtrack towards the Snake. The weakness of his party
made out of the question any attempt to follow Simpson's instructions to reach the Pacific Coast at Fort George. The Snake was crossed on June 6, and Ogden was headed north for the Salmon River region when he learned from two Flathead Indians that the main camp of that friendly tribe was on Henry's Fork and that letters as well as an abundance of beaver were waiting for him there. The freemen who had remained with the expedition had been demanding a return to Flathead Post, but they consented to try this promising hunting ground. Ogden ascended the Snake and Henry's Fork, arriving at the Flathead camp on June 15. The Grand Teton were clearly visible to the eastward. But on learning that there were American trappers in the vicinity and fearing that more of his freemen would desert to them, Ogden kept moving north and northeast. He crossed the Continental Divide by Monida Pass to the headwaters of the Missouri and the Big Hole country. Trapping and trading as he went, Ogden accumulated a fair haul of furs. He believed that by trading he kept the Indians' pelts from the Americans.

On July 16, 1825, the party was just east of Gibbon Pass. Here William Kittson and two employees were detached to shepherd eighteen or twenty horses (here again accounts differ) loaded with furs to Flathead Post. Once more the freemen wanted to break away and return to their home base, but by "threats & entreaties" Ogden prevailed upon them to remain. One of the
men's complaints was the poor quality of the Company's traps and trapchains. Ogden agreed with them. The equipment, he said, was "mere trash." 186

The expedition then continued northeast over the upper drainage of the Missouri and once more crossed the Continental Divide to the upper waters of Clarks Fork of the Columbia. Ogden was once more back in the Oregon Country. About a month was spent trapping in the region of the present Anaconda and Deer Lodge, Montana. The most dramatic event that occurred during this period was the suicide on July 31 of the guide's wife during a fit of jealousy. Ogden expressed sympathy for the woman's four now-motherless children, but he wasted little sentiment on the guide who had three wives "& can afford to loose one." 187

Crossing back into the Big Hole country, the expedition was harassed by Blackfoot horse thieves. In one encounter with Ogden's freemen the natives made away with all of Ogden's tobacco supply as well as a goodly amount of his other trade goods, to say nothing of six horses. Ogden was greatly discouraged. "I wish to God all these Villains were burning in Hell if there be such a place," he confided to his diary, although whether he was referring to the Indians or the freemen is not clear -- he was furious with both. 188

By now Ogden had decided to bring the remnant of his brigade out by way of Fort Nez Percés. Three of the freemen refused to
remain with him, saying it was too dangerous to proceed southward. "I made an example of one," wrote Ogden, "but all in vain." The three deserters left for Flathead Post. Ogden then detached two additional men on September 26 to recover furs that had been cached and take them to the same station. 189

With the remnant of his party left to him -- about twenty men -- Ogden turned southward and crossed the Continental Divide once more, probably by Monida Pass, and was back on the Snake drainage by September 30. Proceeding westward north of the Three Buttes he traversed a divide and reached the upper waters of the Lemhi River. From there he went southward to Little Lost River and then on to the Big Lost River. The latter stream was ascended to its source, and on October 13 the party crossed the summit westward and dropped down to Big Wood River near the present Ketchum. Passing down Wood River and then westward by Camas Creek to the Boise River Ogden found that all the streams had been "well cleared of beaver" by Ross's party of the previous year. He continued northwestward to the Payette River, which was descended to its confluence with the Snake. That stream was forded on October 26, and Ogden proceeded by way of Burnt River to Fort Nez Percés, where he arrived on November 9, 1825. 190

Ogden said that the results of his 1824-1825 expedition amounted to 4000 beaver, "certainly far from what we had a right to expect." 191 Of this number 2485 large parchment beaver pelts and 1210 small beaver skins were delivered at Flathead
Post, along with a small amount of other furs and castoraum, making a total of 3188 "made beaver" (a "made beaver" was a large prime beaver skin in excellent condition or its equivalent value in other skins or goods). Chief Factor McLoughlin, manager of the Columbia District, estimated the expedition's profits at about £2000, but Governor Simpson later revised this figure upward to £3700. The "Big Doctor" complained that the disastrous encounter with the Americans at "Deserter Point" had reduced the returns by approximately £3000.

Ogden returned from his first expedition thoroughly discouraged with the prospects for the Snake Brigade. "You need not anticipate another expedition [in the] ensuing Year to this Country," he wrote to Governor Simpson and the Council while still in the field on June 27, 1825, "for not a freeman will return, and should they, it would be to join the Americans." At first he was inclined to blame his troubles on the disloyalty of the freemen and upon "that damn'd all cursed day that Mr. Ross consented to bring the 7 Americans with him to the Flat heads." He also realized, however, that the higher prices paid by the Americans for furs were too tempting for the freemen to resist.

Chief Factor McLoughlin, who was at Fort Nez Percés when Ogden returned, did not subscribe to this last opinion. On August 9, 1825, he had received word of the defection of Ogden's men and of the territorial claims made by the American trappers. Infuriated by Gardner's threats, he was determined to send
another party to the Snake Country if possible "to defy" the Americans even if the expeditions were thereafter abandoned. He had little sympathy for the complaints of the freemen and employees, pointing out that the Company had not wished to give them credit and did the men a favor in doing so, since the firm stood to lose the property should debtors die or be killed. 196

But McLoughlin must have received some faint insight into the true situation from Ogden, for by October 6 he had taken modest preliminary steps to ease the lot of the trappers. He told the London Committee that traps "were made Stronger since last year than they used to be," and he wrote to Ogden to reduce the price of the men's outfits to the lower Fort Vancouver tariff "to induce them to remain on this side of the Mountains." 197

It had not taken McLoughlin long to learn, once he had talked with Ogden, that the returns of the 1824-1825 expedition were "very handsome." 198 Following a plan he had been contemplating for some time, he ordered Ogden to return to the Snake Country at once, though his route was at first to be westward to join and take command of the expedition which had been sent out during the summer under Finan McDonald and Thomas McKay to trap and explore in the region south and southeast of Fort Vancouver. On November 9 "McLoughlin believed McDonald to be only a four day's march from Walla Walla. 199

Ogden was allowed only twelve days to rest and to refit his party after have been nearly a year in the snows and burning
sun of the Snake Country. This quick turn around was possible because McLoughlin, though hampered by not knowing to which post Ogden would "come out," had as early as June begun to order the purchase of the needed horses and supplies. Among the goods he directed his subordinates to collect were "3 good new lodges, 40 Apichimons [sections of buffalo robes employed instead of saddle cloths], 20 pack saddles, 200 fathoms of pack cords, and 12 elk skins." This time McLoughlin saw to it that the number of engagés was far greater than that of the freemen, a cost the Columbia manager regretted but considered necessary to save the expedition. Indeed, he did not have much choice since there were relatively few freemen available.

Although the "Big Doctor," as McLoughlin was known to his peers, was adamant about showing the British flag through all the Oregon Country, he still was not sure that the Snake brigades would prove profitable in the long run. Circumstances, he wrote to the Governor and Council on March 26, 1826, will tell "whether it is our interest or not to keep up the Snake Expedition, perhaps we are on the Eve of being obliged to withdraw from it."

Before following the fortunes of Ogden as he set out once more for the wilderness, two significant results of his first expedition should be noted. McLoughlin could be a stern man, but he was also a fair one. After listening to the complaints of the freemen at Walla Walla, he had the account books of the Spokane District sent down to Fort Vancouver and studied them carefully.
He found that the made beaver turned in by Ogden in the fall of 1825 had cost the Company only 10 shillings 2-1/2 pence each. Of this amount a mere 2 s. was paid to the freemen when one considered the prices they were charged for their personal supplies, which were valued at a seventy per cent advance over prime cost. The difference between the total cost and the amount the freemen received was due to "losses incurred by desertion and by expenses in sending in clerks and servants to watch over them" -- in other words, to overhead. Further study convinced McLoughlin that the real problem was the "enormously" high prices charged the freemen for their outfits. He pointed out to the London directors that some trappers who turned in 150 made beaver found that even "this was not sufficient to pay [for] their Hunting supplies and their Losses in Horses and traps stolen by the Natives."

The Columbia manager saw the light. If the freemen were treated more generously they would remain loyal, desertions and the resulting losses of furs and balances due would be reduced, and overhead in the form of supervisory personnel could be cut. The Company could well afford concessions. On his own responsibility, since it would take many months to get permission from Governor Simpson and the Committee in London, McLoughlin before the start of Ogden's third expedition in September, 1826, agreed to pay 10 s. for every large prime beaver and half that amount for cubs. The tariff for personal items bought by the freemen was reduced to that paid by regular employees -- fifty per cent
above prime cost for imported goods -- while "hunting Implements" were sold at inventory prices. Freemen were charged only $2 for horses, and at the end of an expedition the men could turn in their implements for full credit, being charged merely for those lost or for the cost of repairing those broken.\textsuperscript{206} These changes were later approved by Simpson and by the Governor and Committee. During March, 1827, the London directors told Simpson: "We can afford to pay as good a price as the Americans and where there is risk of meeting their parties it is necessary to pay as much or something more . . . . By attempting to make such expeditions too profitable the whole may be lost."\textsuperscript{207}

The second important consequence of Ogden's 1824-1825 hunt resulted from correspondence he sent to his superiors when he was on the upper waters of the Missouri. These letters made it only too plain that he was operating on American soil contrary to United States law. This knowledge did not bother Simpson or McLoughlin who viewed such trespasses with equanimity, but the London directors, who were responsible for the Company's reputation at home and abroad, were disturbed. Strict orders were issued against any more such incursions. While trespasses did not entirely cease in the future, the directives put an effective end to the use of Flathead Post as a base for the Snake expeditions, since the route from there to the Snake Country necessarily involved a short traverse east of the Continental Divide.\textsuperscript{208}
When Ogden set out from Walla Walla on his second Snake Expedition on November 21, 1825, his party was woefully weak for such a dangerous journey. In fact, it was largely to bring the company up to a respectable strength that he had been ordered to take over Finan McDonald's Umpqua party. Since the combined brigades numbered only "about 50 Gentlemen & Servants" and since McDonald's expedition, at least at its start, was composed of twenty-two en engaged, two freemen, and six Indians, Ogden must have had only about twenty companions with him at the outset. One of these was Clerk Thomas Dears, a Company employee since 1817.

Ogden followed the south bank of the Columbia River westward until the Deschutes River was reached not far above The Dalles. Crossing the stream, the party turned southwest and south by way of the present Fifteenmile Creek, White River, and Tygh Creek. On December 8 Clerk Thomas McKay and four men from McDonald's party came into camp with the news that their brigade was only a short distance away. The next day the two companies were united on the Deschutes River near the present Warm Springs Indian Agency, Jefferson County, Oregon.

McDonald had collected only 460 beaver, and his equipment and horses were in miserable condition. Even more discouraging to Ogden, McDonald had failed to obtain a native guide to point the way to the rumored rich trapping grounds where the combined brigades were supposed to operate. McDonald reported having found the country in that direction -- southward toward the
Klamath region -- to be "destitute of provisions." 210

In view of these unpromising circumstances, Ogden decided that the season was "too far advanced" to push on toward his original objective. He therefore determined to head for the Burnt River area which had appeared a promising hunting ground when he visited it earlier in the year. He increased the efficiency of his force by sending several Indians and four engagés or freemen, "invalids," back to Fort Vancouver, and after a good deal of trouble he found a Snake Indian willing to serve as guide. The combined parties then set off in a southeast direction until they reached Crooked River, which was ascended eastward for a considerable distance. Trapping along this stream was fairly productive at first, but on the night of December 21 freezing weather brought ice to the beaver waters, and yields declined. The Snake Expeditions had always depended for food upon the beaver and other game killed in the field, and as Ogden's party advanced up Crooked River in the extreme cold few animals fell victim to the hunters. Christmas Day was spent in gloom. "Not 20 lbs. of Food of any kind remaining this evening in Camp," Ogden wrote in his journal. 211

The men were nearly starving as they crossed from the Deschutes drainage eastward to the South Fork of the John Day River. Conditions moderated as this stream was ascended, but the horses still fared badly. "It is painful to see them crawl," Ogden noted on January 21, 1826. 212 Traversing another divide
to the eastward, the brigade reached the upper Burnt River, which was descended almost to its junction with the Snake not far from the present Huntington, Oregon. When Ogden noted the barren region along Burnt River, "covered with wormwood [sagebrush] and sandy soil," he remarked, "this surely is Snake Country."  

Even before they arrived on the Snake the men resembled "so many Skeletons," and Ogden was heartily glad to see once again this river which promised better times. Having been disappointed by the trapping along Burnt River, he decided to try his luck on three streams said not to have been visited by hunters since 1819. The route was now eastward along the south bank of the Snake. The weather turned cold again, and the scarcity of game and beaver had by February 16 reduced the men "to Skin and bones." Most of them were "without a shoe to their feet," a condition which, Ogden remarked, "in this cold weather on frozen ground is far from being comfortable."  

On February 22, from a camp not far above the mouth of the Owyhee River, Ogden was forced by the weakness of his horses and the lack of food to detach two parties to trap at a distance. Jean Baptiste Gervais and seven men were sent back to the region already traversed, while Antoine Sylvaille and five companions were directed to the Owyhee and Malheur Rivers. The latter group was to rejoin Ogden on the headwaters of the Owyhee as the expedition was on its return march, but "not being able to proceed
thither" they returned to Fort Vancouver by way of The Dalles after discovering "a Country abounding in Beaver." Gervais's party also reached the Columbia depot in safety prior to July 17, 1826, having failed to make an appointed rendezvous with Ogden's main company. Little is known of their route or adventures.

Ogden's brigade then continued eastward, crossing to the north side of the Snake near the present Hammett, Idaho. On March 4 fifteen deer were killed, ten of them by that redoubtable hunter, Thomas McKay. "So we shall begin to live again," Ogden thankfully recorded in his journal. Nine days later thirteen elk were slain, five of them by McKay. More elk were brought down during the next several days. Ogden was optimistic. "Every one appears cheerful," he wrote.

But on March 20 Ogden's mood sank to pessimism once more. While camped opposite the mouth of Raft River he heard from some Indians that a party of Americans and Iroquois was not more than three days' march away. "If this be the case . . . our hunts are damn'd," he remarked. He anticipated that some of his men would desert because of the suffering they had endured. Preparing to do the best he could, Ogden made a difficult crossing of the Snake, during which a horse belonging to one of the freemen was drowned. "This to the owner at this season was a most serious loss but in this ill fated Country we are all more or less subject to meet reverses," was Ogden's philosophical understatement.
At the mouth of Raft River Ogden encountered a large camp of Snake Indians who possessed an American flag and were liberally equipped with knives and trinkets obtained from a band of Ashley trappers with whom they had spent the winter near the site of the present Ogden, Utah. Hearing that these Americans were on Bear River, Ogden decided to postpone hunting on Raft River and instead to hasten up the Snake to trap before the beaver in that vicinity were exhausted by these rivals. He followed up the south bank to the Portneuf River. That stream was crossed, and he continued a few miles in the direction of the site of the later Fort Hall. Here buffalo were encountered, so Ogden halted and began gathering meat for the homeward journal. He believed the time would have been better spent hunting beaver, but McLoughlin had ordered him to return to Fort Vancouver by August 10 so that his furs could be shipped to England in the fall vessel. Further, hostile Indians were swarming in the area, and Ogden felt that if his men escaped with their lives and horses they would be "very lucky."

While the party was busily engaged in gathering and drying buffalo meat, a group of twenty-eight Americans and deserters from Ogden's expedition of the previous year came into camp on April 9. The newcomers were astonished to see the British, since they had believed Gardner's threats had bluffed the Hudson's Bay men into avoiding the Snake Country. In this, said Ogden, "they find themselves mistaken." The next day Ogden traded 93
beaver and 2 seasoned otter skins from the "strangers" and even more to his satisfaction received 81 large beaver pelts and 1 small one from the deserters in payment of their debts to the Company. Three other deserters made at least partial restitution through notes or "all the Skins they had."

Ogden was pleased to learn that his deserters were tired of their "New Masters," and he thought it likely that they would return to the Company's fold. They had attended General Ashley's 1825 rendezvous on Henry's Fork of Green River. Although the Americans paid $3.00 a pound for beaver skins, they also charged $2.50 for a knife and $5.00 for a yard of blue cloth. At those prices the freemen were not too much better off than they had been at Flathead Post, where they had families and friends and felt comfortable. One of Ogden's men requested permission to join his father who was with the Americans. Since Ogden considered him a "worthless useless scamp," his wish was granted. But two men from the American camp came over to the British party, and not a single member of Ogden's brigade deserted. Ogden derived much satisfaction from the results of this encounter, and he was particularly pleased with the conduct of his men.

On April 11 Ogden started on his return journey, heading down the Snake, though with only half the provisions he would require. A pause was made to trap Raft River as Ogden had planned. Once more severe weather overtook the party. Ogden recorded his admiration for the men who "naked as the greater part are and
destitute of Shoes," continued to set their traps despite being nearly frozen. Two-thirds of the men were without even a single blanket or any shelter and had been so for six months. To make matters worse, on May 7 several of the party became violently ill from eating tainted beaver meat, and the attacks continued for four days, with nearly half the party falling victim. All Ogden could do was administer a frontier remedy -- pepper and gunpowder mixed with water.

It was May 10 before the company was again in motion. The route was westward from the upper waters of Raft River to Goose Creek, which was examined to its source but proved to be poor in beaver. The brigade continued northwestward, roughly paralleling the south bank of the Snake but finding poor hunting along the streams they crossed. When the Bruneau River was reached a long detour was made to the south to trap the upper waters of that stream and the Owyhee River. Beaver and food were scarce, the weather severe, and the rocky country hard on the men and horses. Nothing could be learned of the six men who were supposed to rejoin the party on the Owyhee. Discouraged, Ogden once more turned northwestward to the south bank of Snake River, which was followed to the mouth of Burnt River.

The latter stream was ascended to its "Forks." There, on June 29, 1826, Ogden "separated" from McDonald, Dears, and McKay, who were sent with some of the men to carry the accumulated furs to Fort Nez Percé, where they were to leave their horses and them
continue by boat to Fort Vancouver with the returns. This detached party carried out its mission with remarkable speed. It reached the Columbia depot on July 12, much to the surprise of Chief Factor McLoughlin.226

Ogden was anxious to see for himself the country traversed by McDonald the previous fall, and he had agreed to meet his trappers under Gervais in that region on July 15. Therefore he took the main party back roughly over his outward track across the watersheds of the John Day and Deschutes Rivers. From the latter stream he turned west and crossed the Cascade Range through deep snow to the waters of the Willamette. He believed the route pioneered by McDonald could be made into a fine road for the Company's brigades going to the Klamath country if used after the snow had melted, but he considered the distance too great and the terrain too difficult to be of use to the Snake Country expeditions.

When he reached the Willamette on July 16, perhaps near the present Champoeg State Park, Ogden met a freeman from whom he borrowed two canoes. These he exchanged at Willamette Falls for a single large canoe, in which he reached Fort Vancouver on the evening of July 17, 1826.227 "Thus," he wrote in his journal, "ends my second Trip and I am I trust thankfull for the many dangers I have escaped and returned with all my party in safty and had we not been obliged from the severity of the winter to Kill our horses for food, the success of our expedition would
have yielded handsome profits, as it is, fortunately no loss will be sustained."\textsuperscript{228}

Although Ogden was disappointed with the results of his second journey to the Snake Country, they were, all things considered, quite satisfactory. No men had been killed by Indians and none had deserted, a fact Ogden attributed to the circumstance that two-thirds of his party was composed of engaged employees on wages, "which," he said, "gave me a decided advantage over the remainder on all occasions."\textsuperscript{229}

Financially, the expedition produced an "apparant" profit of about £2533 -- the true gain would only be determined several years later after the Company had sold the furs in London and completed the accounting. In 1829 Governor Simpson estimated the profit at £3000. The skins brought in by water from Walla Walla and by Ogden himself amounted to 3577 beaver and 123 otter, plus some miscellaneous furs.\textsuperscript{230} What was more, in contrast to previous Snake expeditions, the pelts were in excellent condition. McLoughlin stated in August, 1826, that "the Snake furs this year are the finest furs in the Columbia."\textsuperscript{231} Such results, together with what he had learned when reviewing the Snake accounts, had by that date convinced the "Big Doctor" that the Snake expeditions provided, "in proportion to the capital required," the "Best trade we have on this side of the mountains."\textsuperscript{232}
Ogden had been almost continuously in the field for more than a year and a half, and he deserved the two month's rest he took at Fort Vancouver. But no one spent much time in idleness under McLoughlin's command, and Ogden was no exception. Among other things, he kept busy with reports, correspondence, and preparations for his next expedition. And he presented a number of suggestions for improving the future operations of the Snake parties.

First, he proposed that two parties should be sent to that region, a strong one of at least fifty men to hunt in the dangerous section along the Snake River "and the Country adjacent to it" where Indian war parties were frequent, and another to go south from Fort Vancouver to the Klamath area and on beyond to territory McDonald did not reach. He recommended that at least two-thirds of the party to the Snake River should consist of regular engaged "servants" (employees), and he proposed that the expedition should remain out for from eighteen months to two years. He was convinced that too much time was spent traveling "to and from headquarters," thereby losing the best hunting season and reducing returns, and he pointed out the superiority of the American system of using the rendezvous to keep the trappers continuously at the hunting grounds. The bitter experience of the past winter had shown him that the Snake parties could not rely solely on game while going to and coming from the buffalo country, and he urged that ample provisions be carried along from the start.
Ogden did not get everything he asked for. Only one "Snake Expedition" was to be sent out in the fall of 1826. The Hudson's Bay Company never did adopt the rendezvous system as a regular practice. It preferred to work from fixed posts. Also, for his third expedition Ogden was able to obtain only enough engagés to make up a little more than half his party instead of the two-thirds he considered necessary.235

But, again acting on his own responsibility, McLoughlin freed Ogden from the necessity of returning by a fixed date. Ogden was "to guide himself in his proceedings by the circumstances he finds himself placed in and only to return in 1827 when it suits his views."236 Although such flexibility was not always permitted in the future, a precedent for longer expeditions was established. Also, Ogden was given a supply of provisions to take with him at the start of his next journey, a procedure continued in future years.237

This expedition was also the first to benefit from the improved financial terms offered by McLoughlin to the freemen. The Columbia manager told Governor Simpson that Ogden's men had set out "in high Spirits" and that once in the field they "were exerting themselves well."238

The objectives of Ogden's third Snake Expedition were described by McLoughlin in his report to the Governor and Committee on September 1, 1826: "Mr. Ogden starts from this [Fort Vancouver] with one Clerk and thirty-five men and proceeds direct to the River discovered by Silvaille [Silvie's River] (supposed to be a Branch of the River said to Fall in the Ocean south of the Umpqua)
thence towards Lac Sale [Great Salt Lake] make a Circuit West and comes Out about the Clamet tribe.\footnote{239}

McLoughlin, as did a great many other people at the time, accepted a then-prevailing theory that a large river, as yet undiscovered in its entirety, flowed from a source somewhere near Great Salt Lake westward to the Pacific.\footnote{240} As early as October, 1825, he had heard Indian reports of a large river, rich in beaver, falling into the sea south of the Umpqua, and he believed it to be the fabled stream of the fanciful map makers. He planned to have a hunting or trading party on it in 1826, a determination which at least partly accounts for the decision to send Ogden from Silvies River westward to Great Salt Lake.\footnote{241} By being instructed to go in that direction and also to the Klamath, Ogden's single party was being assigned the work of both the expeditions he had recommended. Noteworthy was the fact that he received no written instructions and that McLoughlin authorized him to be "ruled by circumstances" in determining his eventual route.\footnote{242}

Preparations for the third expedition started well in advance of the date of departure. Some members of the party were dispatched to Walla Walla for the horses required. They brought about 100 animals down to The Dalles, but that number was not sufficient. Probably in anticipation of this deficit, Ogden sent former employee and now freeman Jean Baptiste Gervais and six men from Fort Vancouver to bring additional horse and mules from the Willamette Valley across the Cascades, probably by Santiam Pass, to a rendezvous point on
Crooked River. On September 1, 1826, Clerk Thomas McKay left the depot with another detachment of the men to meet the party with the Walla Walla horses, and on September 11 Ogden and twelve men parted from McLoughlin and started up the Columbia by boat for The Dalles. 243

At that rendezvous point the expedition was quickly organized, and on September 18 the company headed south up Eight Mile Creek. According to Ogden the party then numbered "in all" thirty-five. 244 He did not mention women and children, although there were a number along. Ogden was assisted by only one clerk, Thomas McKay, McLoughlin's stepson and a superb hunter. McDonald was no longer available. He was headed East to retirement. 245 Ogden had not wanted any additional "gentlemen," since they had to be fed by the Company, which he considered "a very great burden." In fact, including McKay there were only three game hunters in the entire party, a circumstance which made it certain that most of the freemen and engaged would have to subsist much of the time on the flesh of the beaver they took or, in extremity, on their horses. 246

Reaching the Deschutes River, Ogden crossed it at the present Sherars Bridge and continued southeastwardly to the Crooked River. Here Gervais and the additional men from the Willamette joined him, but they brought little joy since the horses they convoyed were "miserably poor." Ogden now followed his track of the previous December until October 6, when the party turned southeast, following a small branch of Crooked River and then crossing the divide to the
Silvies River drainage. Beaver were found in fair numbers on this stream, but it was not the beaver heaven reported by Antoine Sylvaillle who had discovered it while detached from Ogden's second expedition earlier in the year. 247

While on Silvies River two of Ogden's French-Canadian freemen became embroiled in a quarrel with Indians over some stolen horses, and both men were severely wounded by arrows. The trappers recovered, but they had to carry the arrowheads in their bodies until they returned to a Company post, for Ogden did not consider himself adequate to the task of removing them. 248

Ogden descended Silvies River almost as far as its discharge into Malheur Lake and then veered southwest to strike the shore of the present Harney Lake which lies immediately to the west of Malheur Lake. He found the western body of water to be brackish and called it Salt Lake. He was disappointed to learn that these lakes had no outlet either to Snake River or to the sea. He did note, however, that waterfowl were abundant, as indeed they are to this day.

For a number of days the beaver hunting had been extremely unproductive along the lower course of Silvies River and around the lakes. And on November 2 snow began to fall. The men were hungry, some even starving. The birds on the lakes proved very shy, so that few were taken despite a liberal expenditure of ammunition. To make matters worse, no native guide could be found, and Ogden had to admit that the men were "all ignorant of the Country." 249
By November 4 Ogden had to confess that prospects were dismal. A "general discontent" prevailed in the camp, and the freemen were plotting to go off on their own. Ogden feared that if game were not found soon the expedition's horses, so vital for success, would "fall for the Kettle."250

Giving up all idea of going across more barren and unknown country toward Great Salt Lake, Ogden decided to head for the Klamath region -- the area about the Klamath Lakes -- by the most direct route he could discover and then to continue on beyond it. Since McDonald had reported finding beaver in that direction and since Ogden agreed to share his provisions with them, the rebellious freemen "appeared contented" and remained with the expedition.

From Harney Lake Ogden now went westward over a dry country where the horses suffered much for lack of water. To make matters worse, Tom McKay had lost the only compass in the party, so the men had only the sun to guide them. On November 14 Ogden noted that during the preceding ten days the men had eaten only six meals "and those slight ones."251 Fortunately, two lakes -- East Lake and Paulina Lake -- were struck the next day, and the horses at last quenched their thirst. On November 17 the party reached the Little Deschutes River near the present Lapine, Oregon. McKay and a number of the men had visited this stream with McDonald, so Ogden was no longer troubled by doubts as to where he was.

The company now turned south up the Little Deschutes River. Traps were set daily, but the results were miserable, since
McDonald's party had cleared the area of beaver during 1825. Leaving the Deschutes drainage by way of the present Chemult Pass, Ogden crossed to waters running southward. He speculated that they eventually joined some "large River which must go to the ocean." He had hopes of finding beaver on this stream, but even if he did not he would feel rewarded if deer and elk could be encountered or even Indians from whom salmon could be obtained. Such was the gravity of the situation in which the expedition found itself. Already the men had started killing the horses for food.

Having passed well to the east of Crater Lake, the party reached the Williamson River on November 29. Here, two days later, two "Express Men" whom Ogden had earlier sent to Fort Vancouver overtook the brigade. For fourteen days they had eaten practically no food and for the last nine days had not once drunk water. According to Ogden they could no longer walk or even crawl. The party continued down Williamson River, passing several Indian villages where they very thankfully were able to trade for roots, dogs, and fish. On December 5 they passed the farthest point reached by McDonald. "We are now consequently strangers to the Country in advance," Ogden noted. But he observed that in trading their furs, the natives were already "well acquainted with Ft. Vancouver prices," a fact he attributed to contacts with Indians in the Umpqua or Willamette regions.

The march south was continued, the route lying along the east shore of Upper Klamath Lake. Snow and rain plagued the party, and Ogden was worried, remembering the hard times of the previous journey.
"The winter season is certainly not the most propitious for discovering a strange Country," he confided in his journal. 254

At the lower end of the lake he struck the outlet, the present Link River which soon becomes the Klamath, but was persuaded by his native guides not to follow it because of the swamps and lakes in that direction. The next two weeks were spent in the vicinity of Lower Klamath Lake and Tule Lake. Beaver were practically nonexistent, and the sagebrush-covered terrain reminded Ogden of the Snake Country. Far to the west he could see a high snow-capped peak, the present Mount Shasta, near which he was told by his guides lived the "astise" Indians. 255

On December 31, 1826 -- which he thought was New Year's Day -- the men followed an old Canadian fur-trade custom by paying their respects to their bourreols. "I," recorded Ogden, "gave them a dram and 1 foot of Tobacco and my best wishes for their success." 256

The party was then somewhere in the "chain of cut Rocks" -- the present Lava Beds National Monument -- south of Tule Lake. Their situation was discouraging. The day before Ogden had given out the last of his provisions. The hunters were having little success, and scouts confirmed Indian reports that to the south lay only high mountains and dry plains with no sign of water. The freemen were restless again, and two said they would leave if the march south continued.

Although he did not specifically say so in his journal, Ogden seems to have been marching south in hope of finding the legendary Buenaventura River thought to link Great Salt Lake with the Pacific
Ocean. Regretfully, being "destitute of recourses," Ogden decided on that last day of 1826 to "return and seek food where we can find it." His goal was now "the lower part of the Clamitt River." But he intended to return in the spring and make another attempt to explore southward.

The Klamath was reached, evidently near the present Klamath, Falls, Oregon, on January 13, 1827. No beaver were found here, and Ogden was thoroughly discouraged. Both Silvies River and the Klamath country had not lived up to reports, and he believed his expedition would be a failure. He tried to console himself with the thought that at least the poverty of these regions was now known and that no more effort would be wasted on them. While waiting to obtain a guide to lead them in the direction of the Willamette the men subsisted largely on dogs traded from the natives.

At last an Indian guide was found, and the party moved down the north bank of the Klamath. On January 23 they reached a point where the river ahead presented "one continued rapid fall & Cascade" as far as could be seen. The guide told them that salmon did not ascend beyond that place, a fact which Ogden took as evidence that the Klamath fell into the sea and was not the branch of a larger stream such as the Buenaventura.

From the Klamath Ogden headed northwest across the Siskiyou Mountains. Trapping proved more productive on the Klamath tributaries, and the Indians kept promising richer fields over the range.
The summit was crossed on February 8, and the party descended the Little Applegate River and then the main Applegate.* Spirits rose among the hunters as beaver and game were found in good numbers, although attacks by Indians on the expedition's horses raised Ogden's apprehensions that if the depredations were not checked "our Scalps will soon share the fate of our Horses."260

While the company was still on the main Applegate River hunting and trapping began to fail. Once more Ogden feared his horses would not "escape the Kettle."261 The natives informed him that the lower part of the Applegate was barren of beaver, being "rocky and stony." But they told of a large river well stocked with beaver which lay several days' march away. While not entirely convinced that this information was true, Ogden said that if there was such a stream "we must endeavour to find it."262

After crossing the Applegate and enlisting a new guide, Ogden started northwesterly on March 13 for the "new River." Two days later the company reached the present Allen Creek and then continued on to descend to the Rogue River near today's Grants Pass on March 22. This stream was the one claimed by the Indians to be "full of Beaver," but much to the disappointment of all the trappers few were taken. To make matters worse, Ogden learned from the natives that six trappers from the Willamette had visited "this quarter" earlier and "had taken all the Beaver." These men undoubtedly were an advance party from Alexander Roderick McLeod's Umpqua expedition of 1826-1827 which shall be noted later. Ogden also heard from the

*Since this essay was written the publication of Jeff LaLande's First Over the Siskiyous has thrown new light on Ogden's route north of the Siskiyous. Interested persons are advised to study this fine work. JAH 7/11/88
Indians that the Umpqua was a hard six days' journey ahead.263

In this situation Ogden decided to send Jean Baptiste Gervais and four men to trap the smaller streams of the Rogue vicinity and then to hunt their way northward by the Umpqua and Willamette "so as to open a communication between this quarter and Fort Vancouver,"264 This detached party reached the Columbia depot safely and brought with them a "Package" of Ogden's returns.265

After parting from Gervais, Ogden and his remaining men went north parallel to the Rogue for a short distance but halted when hunters who had been out in advance returned to camp with news that they had seen "a large track made by Trappers."266 This trail also must have been beaten by a party of McLeod's expedition.

Ogden could see no point in continuing farther into a region already trapped, and he decided to return to the Klamath River and rejoin McKay, who with a band of trappers had been left to test several tributaries of that stream. He would then, he wrote to McLoughlin, "be Guided in his future proceedings by the circumstances he found himself placed in."267 His true intention, however, was to renew his search for the elusive Buenaventura River.268 And he still had another old proposal in mind. He told McLoughlin that if he found a region abounding in beaver, the main party would stay there to hunt while he or McKay brought the furs then assembled to Fort Vancouver and then returned with supplies.269 He could not let go of his "rendezvous" idea.
Scouts were sent out in an attempt to find a more direct route to the Klamath River than the one they had followed to the Rogue, but all reported meeting "one continued Mountain of Rocks" on ascending nearby streams. Thus on April 2, 1827, the expedition started back on its former track and with little deviation from it reached the Klamath on April 13. McKay rejoined the main party a few days later after a most successful hunt. On April 30 the expedition crossed the Klamath and headed back to the lava beds. When Ogden reached the campsite "from whence I returned last winter" his Indian guides told him the "River we are going to is far distant" -- a clear indication that the Buenaventura was on his mind. 270

Continuing in a southeasterly direction the party came upon Turner Creek, a branch of the Pit River. On both the tributary and the main stream, which was reached on May 9, the trappers found the banks lined with pits -- some of them thirty feet deep -- dug by the Indians to catch wolves and deer. Three men and their horses fell into these holes, but only one horse was killed. "To warn others who may chance to travel in this quarter," Ogden named the stream Pit River. 271

Ogden now turned up this stream, passing the hot sulphur springs near the present Canby. He had intended to go downstream but was dissuaded by reports that there were few beaver in that direction. Had he done so he would have found that he was on the only Buenaventura River there ever was -- the Sacramento River and its main branch, the Pit. Until he was quite close to Goose Lake
Ogden had been hoping that he could follow his instructions and take a "Southern Course," but snow on the mountains in that direction and reports that there were no beaver there made him determine to go eastward "with the hopes of falling on the waters of the Snake Country." He then had only about half the pelts he considered necessary to make his "hunt," and well aware that profits counted for more than geographical knowledge with his peers he was ready to give precedence to business over exploration. But he consoled himself with the thought that even though he had incurred considerable expense to determine that the Klamath country contained few beaver, at least future expeditions should not have to relearn the lesson.

Goose Lake was reached on May 15, and the party advanced northward along its eastern shore. Near the upper end of the lake the hunters killed five "White Herrons." Ogden was struck by the "butifull Plumage" and took the skin of one to carry back to Fort Vancouver. This act was in accordance with one of the customs, if not duties, of the Company's trapping brigades -- the picking up of biological, geological, and ethnological oddities for personal, economic, or scientific purposes. Some of these specimens eventually found their way to London. It is possible that Ogden's interest in natural science had been increased by his conversations with British botanist David Douglas at Fort Vancouver during the previous summer.

From Goose Lake the party traveled northeasterly most of the time over barren, rocky, sagebrush-covered ground. "This looks like
Snake Lands," Ogden noted in his journal. On the fourth day out from the lake the Indian guide refused to go farther and left. Ogden was now on his own, knowing only of the country ahead that the Snake River lay somewhere in the direction he was taking. Few animals were seen, food became low, and as the men progressed farther into a region of alkali or muddy lakes and streams, potable water grew scarce. The men began to kill their horses for food, and two mares that died from poisonous water or plants were sold to fill the cooking pots.

At last, on June 4, a scout returned to camp with the welcome news that he had seen some "high hills" which he recognized from having observed them on the outward journey in the fall. Two days later, "to the great satisfaction of all the Party," the expedition reached one of its former camp sites near Harney Lake. Ogden now knew where he was, but he still had the prospect before him of having to traverse much barren country in search of beaver. "To return to Fort Vancouver with our present returns," he confided in his journal, "will be to me most galling."277

Wide expanses of shallow and stinking water on the approach to Harney Lake ended any hope Ogden may still have had of proceeding southward, presumably toward Great Salt Lake. He now followed his old track north of Farney Lake and Malheur Lake and up the valley of Silvies River. On June 11 the company reached the vicinity of today's Burns, Oregon. Ogden had been ill for three days, and now was unable to leave his bed. By the twenty-second, though still
"Skin and Bone." he felt well enough to plan to resume the march the next day. The enforced halt had not been without its benefits. In addition to giving the men and animals a rest, it had permitted the trappers to add more than seventy-five beaver pelts to the returns.

Silvies River was crossed on June 26, and the party continued eastward to the upper waters of the Malheur River. The men were now back in beaver country, and the catches, while "not over abundant," were a decided improvement over those of the recent past. The leader still anticipated "miserable returns" for the entire trip, however, since the trappers had not averaged more than one hundred beaver each. When the main Malheur River was reached, Ogden detached a party of seven trappers to search out the headwaters of the Owyhee River and to hunt there. They were to rejoin the main party on Snake River in twenty days.

Ogden followed down the Malheur, the men suffering much from hot weather. When the North Fork was reached near the present Juntura, trappers who had gone ahead warned against continuing down the main stream because the route was "one continued Rock & Stone," so the company turned up the North Fork to the vicinity of the present Boulah and then crossed eastward to Bully Creek. Descending the latter stream to its junction with the Malheur, Ogden marched eastward to the Snake, which was reached on July 16, 1827, a short distance below the mouth of the Malheur.
Here the main party was reunited with all but three of the trappers who had gone to the Owyhee River. The three missing men were believed to be on the lower Owyhee, and Ogden sent a group to find them. Fortunately for them they turned up, for otherwise Ogden was quite prepared to "leave them to their fate." It was their duty, he believed, "to be here at the appointed time." 278 Such was the often harsh rule of the trail.

Ogden was anxious to get back to Fort Nez Percés to begin preparations for taking the field again in the fall. And undoubtedly he was mindful of the desirability of getting his returns to Fort Vancouver in time to catch the vessel for England. Thus, on July 18, he and four men started for Walla Walla, leaving the main party to follow under the command of Tom McKay. 279

Ogden reached the departmental depot with his furs on August 5, 1827, and the returns were rushed down to the mouth of the Columbia and loaded aboard the Company's vessel, William & Ann, then on the point of leaving the river homeward bound. 280 Information on the exact number of pelts produced by Ogden's third Snake Expedition seems not to be available, but evidently the yield was below expectations. The eventual profits were said by Governor Simpson to have been about £2000. 281

Chief Factor McLaughlin retained his confidence in Ogden but seems to have felt it necessary to defend him when reporting on the journey to the London directors. "Often did the trappers propose to Return Back," he wrote, "and had it not been for his [Ogden's]
influence and Exertions the Expedition would have failed: freemen in the plains with their families starving about them are not Easily led and I have no hesitation in saying that to Conduct a trapping party is the most difficult, harassing, and dangerous charge in the whole Business."282

But if the results had not been spectacular financially they were important in other respects. Oden had discovered Mount Shasta. He had traced the upper courses of the Klamath and Pit Rivers and had christened the latter. He had pioneered a route used by later brigades in traveling between Fort Nez Percés and the Sacramento Valley by way of Pit River and Malheur Lake. And he had revealed that large areas between Silvies River and the Pit and Klamath Rivers had been quite effectively denuded of beaver by fires, by the natives, or, possibly, by disease.283

Oden wasted little time enjoying the comforts of Fort Vancouver. By August 11, 1827, McLoughlin was able to write: "Mr. Oden's party is Ready Equiped to Start."284 This may have been the case at the depot, but upstream there was much more to be done. On that same day the "Big Doctor" sent orders to the upriver posts to provide such additions to the outfit as might be required. J. W. Dense, in charge of the Colville District, was told, for example, to give Oden ten saddles, six leather lodges, and ten parflêches (hide covers to protect packs; hide bags) plus such items as had already been requested. William Kittson was directed "to
proceed to the Nez Perces Camp to assist Mr. Ogden to purchase Horses." 285

Ogden got off from Fort Vancouver for his fourth Snake expedition on August 24, 1827. 286 Accompanied by Clerk Thomas McKay and twenty-eight "trappers," his immediate objective was Fort Nez Percé's. Some of the men had their families with them, but the number of women and children is not mentioned in available records. 287 Although his means of transport seems nowhere to be mentioned, he probably went by boat in view of his heavy load of provisions and goods and in view of the fact that he obtained a good part or even all of his horses at Walla Walla. "My expectations as far as regards success is far from being sanguine," he wrote a few days later, "still the attempt is worthy of a trial." 288

When Ogden set out from the Columbia depot he knew that his idea of a "rendezvous" system had been rejected. During July, 1826, Governor Simpson had written to McLoughlin as follows:

It is intended that a strong Trapping Expedition be kept up to hunt in the country to the southward of the Columbia, as while we have access thereto it is our interest to reap all the advantage we can for ourselves, and leave it in as bad a state as possible for our successors; this party may be called the Snake, Umpqua or any other Expedition you please, but our wish is that it should scour the country wherever Beaver can be found (but on no consideration cross the [Rocky] Mountains) take its returns to Fort Vancouver annually in sufficient time to be sent home by the Ship of the season and return to its hunting grounds immediately. 289

These instructions seemingly left little room for an expedition which would stay in the field for two or more years. As early as 1825 Simpson had made up his mind that the "people of the
Expedition" should bring the returns to the depot and should be reequipped there "instead of having to employ extra men for that service." He had not changed his mind in the interim.

Ogden's specific instructions from McLoughlin were simple: he was "to proceed up the main Snake River to Hunt where Mr. Ross was in 1824." McLoughlin had been informed by Governor Simpson that a trapping party was to be organized at Red River during the fall of 1826 and sent over the mountains under Chief Trader Simon McGillivray and Cuthbert Grant to hunt "in the country to the southward of the Columbia." The "Big Doctor" told Ogden that if he met McGillivray he was "to act according to the circumstances he finds himself placed in." He instructed Ogden to join McGillivray or remain separate "as you think best for the hunts of both." This grand design of Simpson's did not come to fruition, so Ogden was spared what could have been a troublesome decision.

Fort Nez Percés was reached on September 1. Among the "necessary arrangements" made here during the next few days was the receipt of the horses which had been assembled by Chief Trader Samuel Black. In view of the poor quality of the animals, Ogden considered the number "rather bare." As regards traps; however, he considered that he had more than enough "provided they are good."

The men, appearing "tolerable well pleased" with their arrangements, were started up the Walla Walla River, evidently on
September 6, 1827, and Ogden followed on the seventh, overtaking the main party that same day. A Cayuse guide showed the company a new route across the Blue Mountains which, while longer than the two usual roads employed by the trappers, was easier on the horses. Ascending the South Fork of the Walla Walla, Ogden traversed the range and dropped down into the Grande Ronde Valley north of the present Elgin, Oregon. Here a pause was made to cut tent poles, a "necessary precaution" since suitable trees might not be seen for months.

The march was resumed on September 15. Proceeding to the south end of the valley and crossing the Grande Ronde River, Ogden turned southward at the great bend of that stream. After ascending a "steep and stony hill" he reached the upper waters of Powder River and then ascended the main stream south to the vicinity of the present Baker, Oregon. By that time essays at trapping proved that the springs on a large percentage of the traps were faulty, confirming suspicions Ogden had felt before leaving Fort Vancouver.²⁹⁶

Ogden was now back on the "beaten track" followed by earlier expeditions, so he had few hopes of gathering beaver in this region. Leaving Powder River he crossed in a southeasterly direction on a route closely paralleling today's U. S. Highway 30 to the Burnt River, which was descended nearly to its junction with the Snake. Camp was made on the latter stream on September 22, 1827.

The next day Ogden sent Thomas McKay and twelve trappers to hunt on the Owyhee River and if possible to reach the sources.
The uppermost waters had never been trapped. The lower section had been profitably hunted, but Ogden believed it might have recovered. McKay was to rejoin the main company on Little Lost River early in November. Ogden seemingly was not too optimistic as he saw McKay's party ride off toward the south. "I am almost confident they will meet with success," he wrote in his journal. 

With his remaining seventeen men, Ogden crossed the Snake River and started to ascend the Weiser River in the present Idaho, trapping as he went when the route was close to the stream. He got about as far as the present Midvale when his hunters reported seeing signs of other trappers at work "all along the river." Only too soon Ogden learned that six Americans were in the vicinity, a detached party from a group of forty, most of whom were "dispersed in this quarter." Six others of this party had been sent to the Owyhee River, and another six had gone with some Nez Perceés to trade "on the Columbia." Ogden could see disaster facing him. "My hopes of returns in beaver . . . are now blasted," he confided to his journal, "and I am certainly at a loss how to act." His despair grew deeper the next day when he heard that the Americans, who had caught few beaver since they left Bear River in July, now proposed to follow the Snake Brigade back to the Columbia.

In this situation, Ogden determined on September 27 to send Antoine Sylville and five men to the Payette river farther to the east. If no beaver were found there, Sylville was to return to
Burnt River and then move to "Day's River" -- almost certainly the John Day River -- "and either this winter return to Fort Nez Percy or take their chance of finding me." Sylvaille set out on his desperate journey the next day.

Ogden and his dangerously reduced force of eleven followed up the Little Weiser, dogged by the Americans. Few beaver were found, so Ogden turned south to Crane Creek, a tributary of the Weiser. Since hunting there produced no significant results, the journey continued southward to Squaw Creek in the Payette River drainage. The company followed down this stream and reached its junction with the main Payette on October 5. Hunting had been so unproductive that the men were near starvation until Ogden managed to trade a "broken legged horse" from some Snake Indians.

It was soon apparent that there was no point to ascending the Payette. Sylvaille's tracks were found leading in that direction, and Ogden learned that a party of Americans had "almost resided on these rivers for the last eighteen months." So he went downstream to about the site of today's Emmett, forded the Payette, and headed for Boise River. When he reached the latter stream on October 7, the suspected paucity of beaver proved only too true. To make matters worse, Indians got away with a number of horses belonging to the men.

Ogden now proceeded up the Boise a short distance but still found no beaver to speak of. In fact during his entire trip from Walla Walla he had collected only 140 beaver. "This is far from
3,000," he noted ruefully, as he determined to seek his returns "in another quarter." Leaving the Boise where it debouches from the Boise Mountains, he moved on eastward by way of Camas Creek to Big Wood River. While making this traverse, Ogden was joined on October 17 by Sylvaille and party. Instead of following instructions to go westward to the Burnt and John Day Rivers, they had given up after trapping on the lower Weiser and Payette Rivers and followed in the track of the main company, pleading that the condition of their horses did not permit any other course. Ogden's disappointment was only slightly allayed by the fact that their catch averaged twenty pelts per man.

The British leader was further annoyed when he encountered five American freemen camped on Camas Creek. They were a part of the group he had met on the Weiser. The only satisfaction Ogden found in this situation was the fact that the Americans had gathered few skins. "Indeed," he wrote, "the once famed Snake Country for beaver is a ruined one now."300

The Big Wood was reached on October 21. Here a band of Blackfeet began to hover about the camp waiting an opportunity to run off the horses. The animals had to be tied at night and did not get enough food to regain their strength after days of hard travel. But Ogden had one satisfaction here. The Americans who had accompanied him from Camas Creek needed supplies, and he drove a hard bargain, obtaining thirty-two beaver pelts and twenty-five muskrat skins. What was more, Thiery Goddin, one of the men who
had deserted from his party in 1825, turned in thirty-five large beaver in payment of his debt to the Company. These events were further evidence that the British were more than holding their own with the numerous American hunters who had swarmed over much of the Snake Country after Jedediah Smith led the way in 1824.

Trapping also began to produce better results along the Big Wood, and Ogden sent five men to work their way downstream. His party once more reduced to twelve, Ogden turned north up the river, keeping rather closely with the Americans for safety through a region where hostile Indians were seen on every hand. When the site of today's Ketchum was reached, the company turned eastward up Trail Creek and after making a steep ascent "in many parts most dangerous for both man and beast" crossed the divide to Big Lost River.

It was now the first of November, and the weather had turned cold and stormy. Since not much trapping could be done under such conditions, Ogden decided to move slowly to "make" his provisions from buffalo and let his horses feed. But perhaps even more, his objective was "to amuse the American party" still with him so as to induce them to remain in his company and thus give McKay's detached hunters a chance to clean out the beaver in the region south of the Snake where the Americans intended to go. If he could not induce his rivals to remain, he planned to accompany them to Raft River in the hope of "obtaining a share" of any beaver found there.

Ogden had learned a lot about competing with Americans since his
disastrous encounters of 1825.

Buffalo were found along Big Lost River, and ten were killed on November 3. All hands ate to their hearts' content. Ogden found it a "strange thing" to see these "Snake men who have for the last two years suffered such severe privations" feasting, for even at Fort Vancouver the regales -- the allowance of liquor and rations issued upon arrival at and departure from the base post -- were so "trifling" as to be "scarcely worth accepting." and there was no beef or pork available at the depot for the men to buy.

From Big Lost River Ogden crossed northeastward through a pass in the Lost River Range to the upper waters of the Pahsimeroi River, a "fork" of Salmon River. From there it was easy going in an easterly direction to "Days River," the present Little Lost River. This was the place appointed for McKay to rejoin the main group, but McLoughlin's stepson and his companions were nowhere to be seen. Ogden could not wait for the missing men, since a large band of Snake Indians with many horses had swept the vicinity clean of all game and grass. He had to move on the Snake River.

Ogden was still on Little Lost River when a storm of rain on the night of November 12 caused such darkness that the guards could not see the horses "within three paces." In the morning six animals were missing and presumed stolen. Four of the horses belonged to an Indian with a large family who had accompanied the expedition from Fort Nez Percé. The man and his brood were now entirely without transportation and spent all the night "crying and lamenting their
loss." Fortunately, the horses had only strayed and were eventually found.

After descending Little Lost River nearly to its sink, Ogden started out across the Great Snake Plain southward past Big Southern Butte and reached the Snake River a few miles below the site of the later Fort Hall on November 22, 1827. Here the British overtook the large Snake camp whose track they had seen earlier. Ogden considered it good policy to make a considerable gift of powder and other trade goods to The Horse, one of the principal Snake chiefs. This man carried a United States flag -- a sure sign of contacts with American trappers -- but he had proved friendly to the British during earlier expeditions.

The brigade crossed to the south bank of the Snake several days later and made a new camp on Spring Creek, a branch of Portneuf River, a short distance west of present-day Pocatello. Despite all of Ogden's guile, the American trappers who had been with him since October 18 now decided to leave for the vicinity of Great Salt Lake. To make matters worse, eight Nez Percés who had been with the Snakes accompanied the Americans. Their purpose was to ask the traders at the American base to return the next year to barter with the Nez Percé tribe for horses. Ogden had little doubt that his rivals would be back during the coming season to carry on their activities very close to the Company's Columbia River heartland. The only comfort he could take in the departure of his American companions was the knowledge that he had traded more than one hundred beaver pelts from them, leaving them with "miserable" returns.
Winter cold came in earnest by early December. Snow and ice greatly hampered trapping, and Ogden felt compassion for his men who returned to camp from their hunts "covered with ice and nearly froze." Even in their leather lodges the men suffered, because the blankets available at the Fort Vancouver depot during the previous summer were not only few in number but constituted a "wretched assortment." Even food was sometimes difficult to obtain, since the starving Snake Indians, "ravenous as the wolves," pounced on buffalo as soon as Ogden's hunters brought them down.

The brigade now settled into its winter quarters, though between early December, 1827, and late April, 1828, camp was moved at intervals as game, grass, and firewood were exhausted at the various locations. But the range of territory covered was not extensive. All the camps were within a narrow belt along the east (or south) bank of Snake River from about the mouth of the Bannock River on the south to the vicinity of "Black Foot, Hill," the present Ferry Butte, on the north -- a distance of about twenty-five miles.

As December wore on game became more plentiful as the unusually cold weather drove buffalo and deer to seek shelter in the willow thickets along Snake River; but deep snows made it almost impossible for the weakened horses to dig for grass, and a number had to be "left to the mercy of the natives."

The monotony of the enforced idleness was broken on December 20 when two Americans arrived from Little Lost River. They had left
the long-missing McKay there and believed he was headed for Salmon River. This news considerably relieved Ogden's mind, for he had feared that some mishap had overtaken this detachment. He derived further satisfaction from hearing that one member of the American party had joined McKay despite the fact that McLoughlin's stepson had "held out no encouragement for him to leave his employers." The next day Ogden sent off "an Indian with one of the Company's servants with two prime mules" to find McKay and, if possible, to bring him back to the main party. The engage did not return and, despite several attempts to find him, his fate was never learned.

On December 24 the small party to which the two Americans had been attacked reached Ogden's camp. Their leader, Samuel Tulloch, proved "a decent kind of fellow" who told Ogden that the leaders of the American fur trade did not approve of the tactics Johnson Gardener had employed in 1825 to induce Ogden's men to desert and to try to scare the British from the Snake Country. Ogden was further cheered three days later when the men he had sent down Big Wood River reached camp after a most successful hunt. Their packs were in good order, and each trapper brought in an average of one hundred pelts.

While deep snow held Ogden tent-bound he had plenty of time to mull over the problems of the Snake Expedition and to formulate remedies. He entered his thoughts from time to time in his journal, knowing full well they would come to the attention of his superiors. He was not one to pull his punches when aroused by what he considered injustices.
He did not content himself with complaining bitterly about the quality of such necessities as the traps, blankets, and horses available at Company posts for purchase by the freemen or for use of the brigade. He also felt that the trappers, the freemen in particular, were still treated unfairly even after McLoughlin's reforms. Frankly admitting that he had been wrong in believing "with others" that a trapper and his family could be completely outfitted for a year in the Snake Country with the $15's worth of goods he was allowed to buy at envagés' prices, Ogden now believed that supplies to the amount of $25 would be required, "and on his return to the Depot even with the above advances he will reach that place naked." He continued defiantly: "If others who reside at a distance are of a contrary opinion, let them make a winter trip to the Snake Country, and be convinced for there is nothing like being on the spot in the present times and everyone judging for himself."^308

He was not entirely convinced that McLoughlin's reforms were sufficient to prevent desertions despite his already ample experience to the contrary. He pointed out that whereas the Company paid the equivalent of two dollars for a large beaver skin and one dollar for a cub pelt, the American traders paid an average of five dollars a skin, large or small. This difference appeared large in the eyes of the hunters despite the fact that the British sold goods on "moderate" terms while the Americans charged at least 150 per cent more. Ogden also pointed out that a trapper could obtain his outfit
from the Americans in the Snake Country and thus did not have to carry provisions to get him from the depot to the beaver grounds and accordingly could get by with fewer horses. He even had the temerity to direct attention to the contrast between himself with his rather modest remuneration of a single share of that portion of the Company's profits set aside annually for officers, and the young American fur-trade entrepreneurs, Smith, Jackson, and Sublette, who were rumored to have cleared $20,000 from their first year's operations. Even one of the trappers who deserted him in 1825, he heard, had been able to leave the mountains "an independent man," but in the Company's service it was doubtful that a hunter, even with the strictest economy, could accumulate a similar competence even in ten years.

Indians were a constant nuisance, stealing horses, traps, food, and loose articles about the camp. Ogden lived in constant fear that they would kill his hunters or messengers as they ranged over the region alone or in very small groups. Many times on past expeditions had he wished all Indians -- particularly the Snakes -- exterminated, but when the Americans who were camped nearby asked him to join them in waging war against the Indians when spring arrived, Ogden expressed his personal interest but "not knowing the opinion of the Concern" refused to commit himself. If it were left to him alone, he wrote, he would not hesitate to spend a year or two in wiping out "the whole Snake tribe, women and children excepted." He was well aware, however, that "those who live at a
distance" -- particularly the London directors -- were "of a
different opinion." He added: "The only reply I should make to
them is, gentlemen, come, endure and suffer as we have done and
judge for yourselves if forbearance and submission has not been
carried too far."

By mid January, 1828, the fury of the winter -- more severe
than even the oldest Indians could remember -- was taking a dangerous
toll on the horses. "Now almost daily one or two are found dead,
and affords food for the wolves and crows, who now muster strong
around us," Ogden wrote on January 12. Game continued to be
abundant and was more easily taken after the women in camp equipped
the hunters with snowshoes. No one went hungry, but boredom was a
demoralizing factor. Much to Ogden's disgust -- and amazement,
since playing cards were not sold to "servants" at Fort Vancouver --
the men gambled from early morning until late night. His attitude
seems to have changed somewhat, however, when he found that his
companions had won fourteen skins from the Americans. "Situated as
we now are," he said, "we require all."

Ogden played a more serious game. Tulloch and his American
trappers were still with him and were eager to open a communication
with their companions near Great Salt Lake. Several attempts to
send messengers through the snow failed. "The Americans are now
more anxious to procure snow shoes," Ogden noted on January 16, "and
I am equally so they should not." The British leader feared that
if the Americans got through they would return with traps and trade
goods -- particularly liquor -- and ruin his spring hunt upon which all his hopes for success now rested. He issued orders that no snowshoes were to be made for the Americans, and his men, who also had a strong economic interest in making a good hunt, obeyed, even though offered as much as fifty dollars for a pair. But when the Americans went to the Indian camp to hire a native to carry letters, Ogden had to capitulate. "It is impossible for me to bribe so many Indians," he concluded. Fortunately for relations between the two groups, the Americans did not suspect that Ogden was behind their failure to obtain snowshoes. The British bourgeoisie considered it his duty to keep his rivals supplied with meat, since they could not hunt without snowshoes, but he believed the "interest of the Concern" entirely justified him in putting every possible impediment in the way of their trading.

Finally, on January 25, Ogden reported that the Americans were making their own snowshoes. All he could do was console himself with the thought that they probably could not return with a pack train of supplies before April. Three days later two of his rivals started for Great Salt Lake. Ogden noted with some satisfaction that their snowshoes were "certainly makeshifts" and that the men almost expected to fail. Before they left Ogden traded two beaver pelts from them, and he sent some of his men along with them to the nearby Indian camp to barter for any stray skins that might be there. He was taking no chances that the Americans might snatch a beaver or two away from him. When the American messengers returned to camp
in defeat on February 4, Ogden found the event "most agreeable." But at the same time this failure, together with those of several employees he had sent to find McKay on Salmon River, caused him to reflect that "in days of yore, such men as these would have been dismissed from the service, and here we are glad to have them."317

The monotony of life in the winter camp was interrupted briefly on February 17, 1828, when a small party of Americans arrived from Bear River. It was headed by Robert Campbell, a Missouri trader, who was on his way to the Flathead country to collect furs he had traded there during the previous summer. Campbell informed Ogden that two of the American trappers who had accompanied the British expedition since September were heavily indebted to his company. "To this I made reply," Ogden noted in his Journal, "that I had no knowledge of the same, and as he was now here it was his duty to secure his debts and his men also." Ogden pointed out that he had given the two trappers no encouragement to join him. "I took the liberty also of observing," he added, "that my conduct towards their party was far different from what I had received [from Americans] four years since."

Campbell acknowledge the truth of this remark and said that if the Americans had then been united in "a regular Company" the treatment Ogden had received from Johnson Gardner would have been far different. But the British leader was still wary. "This may be so," he wrote, "at all events -- situated as they are dependent on me -- it is not their interest to say to the contrary. I have
acted so far, honourable towards them, and shall continue so, and probably situated as we are, it is the best policy we can adopt."

Obviously, Ogden enjoyed the superior position -- both morally and economically -- in which he found himself.

On March 1, 1828, three men who had been sent in search of McKay's detached party returned to report they had found McLoughlin's stepson in "snug winter quarters" at the junction of the Salmon and Lemhi Rivers, near the present Salmon, Idaho. This was welcome news for Ogden, since he was anxious to reunite his expedition so that he would be strong enough to press a spring hunt up the Snake River in the face of the Blackfeet.

Two of McKay's men had accompanied the messengers back to Ogden's camp. One of them, a young Canadian who had deserted from the Americans the previous fall and joined McKay, made sure he was clear of any debts owed to Tulloch and then, said Ogden, "entered into an arrangement with me, on the same footing as our freemen."

How sweet this turn of events must have been for Ogden!

All through March the snow lay deep on the ground, but as the weather began to moderate a bit and stretches of open water to appear on the rivers Ogden sent his trappers out in several directions. "It is truly a novel sight to trap on snow shoes," he remarked. His hunters employed a sled to bring in the game they brought down, another unusual means of transportation in a region where during most winters, he said, the snow depth seldom exceeded two inches. Four canoes were built to enable the men to set their
traps along the several channels of Snake River. Without them, Ogden believed, the returns would have been reduced by two-thirds. While the yield from the traps was not great, it was fairly steady, and these furs, together with the few he was able to trade from the Indians and Americans, gave him a slight hope that his expedition might not be a complete failure.

On March 26 Bulloch and his party of Americans who had been with Ogden since December started for Great Salt Lake. Although relations between the two groups had been amicable, Ogden was heartily glad to see his rivals go. "They caused more trouble than profit," in his opinion. Ogden did not learn until more than a month later that shortly after leaving his camp these men had been attacked by the Blackfeet with the loss of at least three men, about $4000 in furs, forty-four horses, and a quantity of trade goods. Ogden was entirely innocent in this matter, but William Ashley afterwards accused him of profiting from it by knowingly purchasing the pillaged furs from the murderers. Far from doing so, Ogden recorded that news of the tragedy received from the Snake Indians "caused a general gloom over the camp," and he made no effort to trade with the natives who said they were on their way to Great Salt Lake to restore some of the property and horses to their rightful owners.

At that time the American trappers in general were -- or pretended to be -- suspicious of the Hudson's Bay Company's motives and actions in the Snake Country. They experienced a series of
costly clashes with the Indians -- mostly Blackfeet -- but noticed that the British brigades roamed about freely with relatively minor harassment. If they knew of the salutary lesson administered by McDonald in 1823 they preferred to forget it. It made better political propaganda to accuse the Company of supplying the Indians with arms and ammunition for hostile purposes, of trading for plundered furs, and of "making violent exertions to monopolize the fur trade West of the Rocky Mountains."321 The last part of this accusation was true enough, but the Company's expeditions were under orders from the Governor and Committee to avoid any aggressive or violent actions towards the Americans that might serve to give the United States Government cause for complaint.322 The Company proposed to gain supremacy solely through vigorous competition in the trade, by underselling its opponents whenever and wherever opportunity offered. It was well aware that it had the resources to wage such a struggle, while most of the Americans, generally under-financed, could not afford to operate for long at a loss.

On March 27, 1828, Ogden received a letter from McKay indicating that he was still snowbound on Salmon River. Ogden realized that this detached party could not join him in time to make a projected spring hunt on Henry's Fork, and he knew his own party was too weak "to face the war tribes" in that region. Thus plans to ascend the Snake River for any considerable distance were abandoned. Instead, on April 8 he sent a party of six men under Antoine Sylvaille, "the most trustworthy man I have at present at my disposal," to hunt on
the tributaries of Big Wood River and then to return to Fort Nez Percés by the end of July.

During the last few days of April Ogden moved his camp northeast along Snake River to a site at the mouth of Blackfoot River and near the present Ferry Butte. Signs of Blackfoot horse thieves were noted, and a careful guard was kept over the precious remaining horses. Ogden's anxiety to have McKay join him became acute. To his great satisfaction, McLoughlin's stepson and his party appeared on May 8, bringing more than 440 beaver.

Thus reenforced, Ogden was emboldened to ascend the Snake. The party advanced to a point about thirteen miles north of the present Idaho Falls. Trapping on the way was much more productive than expected, but rapidly rising water in the river put an end to the prosperity. Since melting snows could be expected to keep the river high for a month or more, there was nothing else to do but turn about and start for Fort Nez Percés.

The expedition was back on the Blackfoot River on May 22. The next day one of the men attempted to swim the stream with his horse and traps but "lost all" and was nearly drowned himself. "A most serious loss," commented Ogden, "to both the trapper and the concern, as he must now in a manner remain idle."323

The Blackfeet had been seen in numbers for several days, and on May 24 tragedy struck. One of the freemen, Louis LaValle, was killed by the Indians less than half a mile from camp. Ogden estimated that there were about sixty Indians in the bend that murdered
LaValle and stripped him naked. Fortunately, four other trappers in the vicinity saw the raiders and managed to hide themselves. The body was brought back to camp and buried. LaValle left behind a wife and three children, "in a manner destitute." Ogden was outraged. "It is certainly most calling to the feelings of all, who are doomed to seek their bread in this country," he wrote, "that these villains commit so many murders without it being in our power to retaliate in kind."324 Three days later another man was chased by the Blackfeet but managed to get back to camp safely.

The course was now westward along the south bank of the Snake River. The pace was rather leisurely due to bad weather and the necessity of hunting buffalo and "making provisions" to carry the party over the barren stretches on the homeward journey. At Raft River a short detour was made up that stream to trap beaver and to kill buffalo. Lurking Blackfeet fired five shots at one of the hunters, but he escaped without injury. Enough bison were brought down to bring the total supply of meat to an average of one bale per man. Ogden hoped this would suffice to get the men back to Walla Walla. "There being no fat," he remarked with some satisfaction, "will oblige them to eat less."325 His calculations threatened to go awry, however, when rain forced him to lay by for a day. "The loss of this day does not increase our stock of provisions," he commented, "for when Canadians are idle they consume double the quantity than when employed."326

Near the Owyhee River on July 7 Ogden learned from the Snakes that Sylvaille's advance party had been attacked on May 20 by 150
Blackfeet. One woman had been killed and all the horses stolen. The survivors cached their returns -- 650 beaver -- on Big Wood River and made their way on foot to the Owyhee, nearly starving during the journey. "They were fortunate in escaping with their lives," was Ogden's understated comment. Two days later the main party overtook Sylvaille and three of his men on Malheur River.

On July 11 Ogden sent that premier frontiersman and scourge of all hostile Indians, Tom McKay, and eleven men back to Big Wood River to recover the hidden furs. No account of his trip is known, but McKay was successful and brought the skins to Fort Vancouver.

The main party continued its way down the Snake and reached Burnt River on July 14. From this point the journey was over the usual trail by way of Powder River and over the Blue Mountains to Fort Néz Percés. Ogden arrived there on July 19, 1828, and the rest of his men followed on the twenty-second. "So ends my fourth trip to the Snake Country," he wrote in concluding his journal, "and I have to report the loss of lives [two men and a woman], which to me is at all times most distressing to my feelings, but such things will happen independent of all precautions to prevent it. In other respects . . . the returns far exceed my expectations."

Ogden and eighteen of his men brought their furs down to Fort Vancouver by boat, arriving there on July 31, 1828. McKay reached the depot on August 5 with the cached skins from Big Wood River. All told, the returns amounted to 3093 beaver, large and small; 19 "coating" beaver [skins which had been worn by the Indians as
clothing]; and 59 land otter. They were valued at £4002.5.11. Governor Simpson later estimated the profit of Ogden's fourth expedition at £2500.331

Chief Factor McLoughlin was highly gratified by the results. "Mr. Ogden's returns are better than last year," he informed the London directors on August 7, 1828. "When it is considered Mr. Ogden was in a part of the Country over run by American Trappers, his returns are a proof of his exertions & those of his Party with whose conduct he is highly pleased." He also regretted the cost in lives at which these results had been achieved.332

But the Columbia manager had no intention of letting this valuable conductor of parties enjoy a hard-earned rest. "As soon as the people return from putting the Furs on board the Vessel (which I detained a few days for them)," McLoughlin added, "he will start on his return to his hunting grounds." Three days earlier he had instructed Samuel Black at Fort Nez Percés to obtain seventy "good horses" for Ogden's use.333

As it turned out, the delay seems to have been slightly longer than the good doctor anticipated. The very next night, August 8, 1828, he, Ogden, and the other inhabitants of Fort Vancouver were startled by Indians making "a great noise" before the fort gate, shouting that they had brought an American. The man proved to be Arthur Black, a member of a trapping party headed by Ogden's traveling companion and trade rival of 1824-1825, Jedediah Smith.
when the exhausted and almost naked Black could speak, "we elicited the particulars" of his story, wrote Ogden years later. Black unfolded a chilling tale: the Americans, on their way from California to Great Salt Lake by way of Fort Vancouver, had been treacherously attacked by Indians on the Umpqua River. He believed himself to be the only survivor. But on August 10 Smith and two other members of his party reached the depot, guided by friendly Tillamook Indians.

McLoughlin, whose heart was as big as his massive frame, experienced "great joy" that as many as four persons had miraculously escaped the slaughter, and he offered the hospitality of the establishment. Even though the American competitors had reached the very core of the Company's operations west of the Rockies, the "Big Doctor" found no satisfaction in their defeat. "This unfortunate affair," he told the London directors, "is extremely injurious to us as the success & facility with which the Natives accomplished their object lowers Europeans in their estimation & consequently very much diminishes our security."

At that time Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod was on the point of leaving for a trapping expedition south from Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin ordered him to recover as much of Smith's property as possible and to punish the murderers if he thought the results would be salutary. Jedediah Smith left the depot on September 6 to accompany the punitive expedition.
Exactly how much time Ogden had to discuss matters of mutual interest with Smith is not apparent. Very probably the preparations to get McLeod off caused some postponement of Ogden's departure for Walla Walla to organize his fifth Snake Country expedition. But whether he left the depot before or after September 6 is not clear. All that seems certain from the sources thus far examined is that he was at Fort Nez Perces in time to set out for the Snake Country on September 22.338

Ogden's journal of 1824-1825 gives no indication that he developed any particularly close friendship with Smith during the several months the British and American brigades traveled in close proximity at that time. In fact, if William Kittson's comment that Smith was "a sly cunning Yankee" is any clue, the relationship between the leaders of the two companies was anything but cordial.339 Yet years later Ogden claimed to have been "intimately acquainted with poor Smith."340 If so, the two men seem to have gotten to know each other much better at Fort Vancouver during August, 1828.

In any event, it is clear that Smith gave Ogden and Governor Simpson an account of his adventures during at least the previous two years. Long after the conversations at Fort Vancouver Ogden was able to repeat with considerable detail, though not always with complete accuracy, Smith's account of the massacre of ten of his men by the Yavapai Indians on the Colorado River in August, 1827.341 The British trader had occasion to profit by this information two and a half years later when he encountered what he believed to be the same native band somewhere in the vicinity of the Colorado.
It is not certain that Smith also told Ogden of the more than 1500 pounds of beaver skins he had collected in the San Joaquin and lower Sacramento Valleys in the spring of 1827, but he did indicate that he found the Sacramento River "well stocked with beaver" early in 1828. This news undoubtedly influenced the route of the Snake Brigade in 1829 and 1830, particularly since Smith had declared that his intention before the massacre had been to return west with a "large body of Trappers" to scour the region for beaver.

Ogden's fifth Snake expedition began on September 22, 1828, when he rode out from Fort Nez Percés to join his party camped a short distance away at the foot of the Blue Mountains. "We are this year well provided in numbers as regards horses and traps but both so far from appearances are of an indifferent quality," he noted in his journal. Nevertheless, he was confident that if beaver were found, "we shall always find ways and means of taking and conveying them to the Columbia River." In addition to the bourgeois himself, the company seems to have consisted of twenty-nine men and boys, three Indians, and the usual women and children.

The objective of the party was the still-unexplored territory lying south of the Snake River drainage, the vast portion of the Great Basin between Great Salt Lake and the Sierra Nevadas. This region had never been penetrated by any trapper, British or American, except for Jedediah Smith's brief transit in 1827. Ogden had received vague reports from the Indians of beaver streams in that direction, and knowledge of Smith's deep penetration into Mexican
territory seemingly had made Governor Simpson more than ever eager to exhaust the fur resources in that direction before the Americans should reach it. Ogden was instructed to return in time to ship his furs to England by the supply vessel of 1829.

Traveling eastward by his track of the previous year across the Blue Mountains to the Grande Ronde River and then to Powder River, Ogden detached two groups to trap the upper waters of Burnt River and the Malheur River. With the remainder of the brigade he proceeded to the junction of the Burnt and Snake Rivers, where he sent eleven more men to hunt on some of the northern tributaries of the latter stream. This party, under François Payette, returned to the Columbia without ever rejoining the main command. Ogden was "fully aware" of the dangers of thus separating his party into four small groups, but he felt that the depleted stock of beaver near the Snake, making hunts by large brigades unprofitable, left him no alternative.

With his ten remaining men, Ogden moved to the Malheur River. The party ascended this stream, trapping with only moderate success until October 21, by which time the two small parties sent to hunt in this direction had rejoined the main brigade. Continuing in a southern direction along the eastern base of Steens Mountain, the company passed Alvord Lake and reached Quinn River near the northwest corner of the present Nevada. Ogden, having heard from local Indians of a river with beaver only four days' march distant, pushed forward to the southeast, but it was November 9, 1828, before he reached a
"fine large stream apparently well lined with willows." He had struck the present Humboldt River about eight miles above today's Winnemucca, Nevada.

To Ogden's great joy, a beaver house, "apparently well stocked," at once greeted his eye. The next morning, "long before the dawn of day," every trap and trapper in camp was in motion toward the upstream hunting grounds. When the traps were checked the next day the catch was fifty beaver. To men who had already begun to eat their exhausted horses this haul meant more than mere skins -- they could once again fill their stomachs without sacrificing their precious animals.

Since Ogden, as far as is known, was the first European to see the Humboldt River -- which he later named the Unknown River because of this fact -- he had no idea where the stream terminated. He speculated that it might be a part of the Owyhee River. He was tempted to explore it downstream, but visiting Indians said that beaver were more numerous on the upper waters, so Ogden turned eastward along the stream that in a short time was to set the course of the main Overland Trail. A few days later natives told him that the river discharged into a lake and that no salmon ascended it. He was relieved by this news because it meant that the stream had no connection with the Pacific Ocean and that he was therefore not intruding on the trapping territory assigned to his fellow officer, Alexander Roderick McLeod.
On the night of November 24 a veteran trapper, Joseph Paul, returned to camp "dangerously ill." Ogden was worried. "This poor man stands but a poor chance of living long in this country," he noted in his journal. "A sick man is not an enviable situation in any part of the world, still less in this." The march was halted to see if Paul would recover, but the patient quickly came to share Ogden's gloomy progno\textit{m}ation. He begged his companions, "as an act of charity," to end his sufferings by drowning him in the river. Ogden would have none of it. "This mode although practised by the Snake Indians and other tribes will not answer for Christians," he remarked.

After ten days, however, it became evident that the party would have to be on its way. The horses had exhausted the scanty forage available, and the men were on short rations because beaver had been nearly exterminated in the nearby waters. On December 6 the sick man believed he could move. Assisted by two companions and "well covered" by robes and blankets from the bitter cold, he mounted a horse and managed to keep with the brigade as it marched eastward by slow stages.

By December 10, when the company was very close to the site of the present Carlin, Nevada, it was clear that Paul could go no farther. He implored the company to leave, and two men volunteered to stay with him. Reluctantly, Ogden consented. In fact, there was nothing else to do. To remain might result in having to eat the entire horse herd, an event which would have meant the failure of the expedition and possible death for the men. So Ogden left
a bag of peas and a three-year-old horse in camp, and the main party continued its way up the Humboldt.

The river was by that time "entirely fast bound with ice," so the Chief Trader decided to proceed more directly toward Great Salt Lake and Bear River and to leave further hunting along the Humboldt until spring. Guided by an Indian he had picked up, he left the river a short distance above the modern Elko on December 12, 1828, and marched across the ranges and valleys of eastern Nevada and then passed around the northern end of Great Salt Lake. Turning northward, the brigade reached the northern end of Pocatello Valley, Utah, on January 1, 1829, both men and horses worn down by hard travel and lack of food.

On that day and on January 4 and 5, the two men, a woman, and two children who had remained behind with Joseph Paul limped into camp. They reported that Paul had died eight days after Ogden left him. The leader observed: "There remains now only one man living of all the Snake men of 1819 and rather extraordinary all have been killed, with the exception of two who died a natural death, and are scattered over the Snake Country. Indeed for a country so lately discovered it is almost incredible the numbers that have fallen in it." 352

Buffalo encountered in this region north of Great Salt Lake eased the food shortage which once more had become acute, but Ogden discovered as he moved farther northward that the Malad River, which had been trapped by American for four years, yielded
only a moderate number of beaver. In fact, he found it "most 
strange" that any beaver still remained, and he was pleased that 
his traps continued to produce a "good business" considering the 
extremely cold weather.\textsuperscript{353}

It had been Ogden's intention to pass the winter at his 
former quarters near the junction of the Fortneau and Snake Rivers, 
but he learned from the Indians that there were no buffalo there 
and that Blackfoot raiders had been making life miserable for the 
natives. Also his horses, mere "skin and bone," were in no condi-
tion for such a long trip. Therefore he spent the next month and 
a half on the upper Fortneau River and along the lower Bear River, 
where grass and buffalo were sometimes available. A large consi-
deration was the preparation of dried buffalo meat for the homeward 
journey.

The weather during most of the period was severe. One of the 
men became seriously ill on February 14. Ogden gave him an emetic, 
but when the patient still complained three days later, the leader 
said, "I have given him all the purges and vomits I had, and it is 
his duty to recover, for he can expect no longer any assistance 
from me."\textsuperscript{354}

On March 24, near the junction of the Bear and Malad Rivers, 
Ogden considered his winter hunt ended. He then had 1300 beaver 
and otter pelts and was looking forward to spring trapping along the 
Humboldt. Setting a course for the latter stream, he retraced his 
eastward track for most of the distance. \textit{En route} he detached a
A party under Charles Plante to trap on Raft River and to return to Fort Nez Percé by the route of 1826. Oden was left with only fourteen men.

On April 2 it was discovered that Indians had stolen two horses. "We are too lenient towards these wretches," he noted in his journal, "but the great difficulty is to discriminate between the guilty and the innocent." Oden did not feel too much sense of loss, however, since one of the missing animals was "of little value" and "both belong to our horse guard who as he does not trap will not injure returns, but oblige him to perform the remainder of his journey from this to Fort Nez Perce on foot." 355

The Funboldt a short distance above its junction with the North Fork was reached on April 10, 1829. The brigade followed down the main stream, trapping with indifferent success as it went. On the way a long detour was made northward up Maggie Creek and on the the headwaters of the South Fork of the Owyhee River. The upper waters of the latter were hunted intensively in accordance with Governor Simson's policy of creating a "fur desert." Yet Oden had a few twinges of conscience. "It is scarcely credible what a destruction of beaver [has occurred] by trapping this season," he noted; "within the past few days upwards of fifty females have been taken and on an average each with four young ready to litter. Did we not hold this Country by so slight a tenure it would be most to our interest to trap only in the fall, and by this mode it would take many years to ruin it." 356
When the yield of furs began to drop off significantly Ogden turned about and headed back for his Unknown River. Following a southwest course, the men reached their goal some distance east of the present Winnemucca on May 9, 1829. Ogden and his party now started to trap downstream to the river's discharge into the lake of which he had been told the previous November. Hunting was good but much handicapped by a lack of traps. More than a hundred traps had been lost since the expedition started, about half of them stolen by Indians. On May 13 only eighty-two remained. Ogden hoped that a "stack" of new traps would be waiting at Fort Vancouver, but he was not optimistic that such advance preparations for his next expedition would have been made. As a result, he worried, "we shall again . . . lose half our fall hunt . . . from the late season we start." 

Humboldt Sink was reached on May 29, 1829. The Indians in this vicinity were extremely annoying, stealing traps and horses and attempting to murder detached hunters at their vocation. A party of more than 200 natives approached the camp the next day, but observing that the trappers were in a posture of defense they made peace. Ogden later told McLoughlin that although he had experienced several narrow escapes during various expeditions, "he never ran greater risk of being cut off with his whole party" than during this episode near the mouth of the Humboldt. From these Indians Ogden heard of a river having abundant salmon and distant an eight days' march -- undoubtedly today's Truckee River.
Ogden believed that good beaver streams might lie to the south, and he told the natives they would see him again in three months.

On May 31 Ogden decided that his party was too weak to continue the advance, so he turned back up the Humboldt bound for Fort Nez Percés. He departed from his outward route beyond the Little Humboldt and the Santa Rosa Range to take a more northwardly path before turning westward to rejoin his old trail south of Alvord Lake. Near the north end of Steens Mountain Ogden told his men of his intention to go to the Columbia by way of Silvies River instead of by the more direct Malheur River-Grande Ronde route, because he hoped to take another 200 beaver by so doing. Some of the men, already short of provisions, objected, but the leader's will prevailed.

Thus on June 16 the party crossed the north end of Steens Mountain and the next day arrived at the familiar Malheur Lake. Ascending Silvies River, Ogden crossed Sunflower Flat to the South Fork of the John Day River. Travel down this latter stream was extremely hard on the horses, and Ogden feared that many of them would have to be left behind. But on July 2 the party reached a camp of Snake Indians busily engaged in taking salmon. More than 200 half-dried fish were purchased, and the men once again had full stomachs and happy dispositions. "Canadians are certainly strange beings," Ogden reflected; "in the morning more curses were bestowed on me than a person would bestow blessings in a month, and now they find themselves rich in food with a fair prospect of soon reaching
the end of their journey I am in the opinion of all a clever fellow for coming this way."

From this camp the brigade soon turned up the North Fork of John Day River and followed it about as far as the present Dale. Here the party left the stream and turned north over the Blue Mountains. Since the route to Fort Nez Percés was now familiar to most of the men, Ogden and two companions went on ahead on July 8. It is not known when the leader dragged himself into Walla Walla, but he and some of his men reached Fort Vancouver on July 24, 1829, and the rest of his people arrived on August 1.

McLoughlin was highly pleased with the results of Ogden's fifth Snake expedition. "His Returns are better than last year and amount including with what his people traded here and in the Interior to four thousand Beaver, and in my opinion remarkably well dressed and in the highest state of preservation, which, when it is considered some of these Furs have been Carried on Horses backs through the Country since last Fall Winter & Summer, certainly does him great credit." Although not bound to do so, the departmental manager paid the trappers an extra shilling for each made beaver "to avail ourselves of the great care they have taken of their Furs." McLoughlin later said that the expedition had cleared 4000 pelts, he added, were "the best dressed beaver I have ever seen," and be predicted that due to the care with which they had been cleaned and handled they would be worth one quarter more than "former Snake Beaver."
During Ogden's absence important changes in policy concerning the Snake Country expeditions had taken place. Governor George Simpson had reached Fort Vancouver on October 25, 1828, on his second inspection tour of the Columbia Department. With his usual thoroughness he reviewed every aspect of the firm's operations west of the Rockies. In general he was pleased with McLoughlin's management and with the progress which had been made since 1825.

He was particularly gratified by the success of his "fur desert" campaign in the Snake Country. "I cannot quit the subject of our Trapping Expeditions," he reported to the Governor and Committee in London, "without expressing my utmost satisfaction with the zeal, activity and perseverance manifested by Chief Trader Ogden, in the very arduous Service on which he has been employed for some years past." 366

Simpson now considered the Snake Country "much exhausted," but thought that if American opposition could be eliminated the region would "afford employment" for a Company brigade of thirty or forty men for several years to come. "While it even defrays the expenses of such a party," he told the directors, "we consider it a good policy to keep them in that quarter." 367 In short, the Snake expeditions had largely accomplished their assigned task but were to be maintained on a modest scale to make certain that the "scorched earth" remained scorched and hence unattractive to competitors. Also, the pelts from the Snake Country still made up a significant portion of the Columbia Department's returns. 368
The "Little Emperor" was quite sanguine in his expectations that American competition could be at least greatly reduced. He believed the trappers from Missouri and New Mexico, though numerous, were poorly organized and insufficiently financed. The proprietors of the several American concerns and the outfitters of the southern expeditions were, he maintained, "merely adventurers who have nothing to lose." He did not believe they possessed the capital required "to seat themselves down in regular opposition." 369

As for the conductors of parties, he dismissed them condescendingly as "men who have been common Trappers and therefore possess no influence." But his highest scorn was reserved for the ordinary mountain men. The American trappers, he wrote in March, 1829, were "generally speaking, people of the worst character, run-aways from Jails, and outcasts from Society." He claimed that these men were so insubordinate that the Company "might repeatedly have broken up their parties; had it wanted to seduce them from their leaders, but not wishing to risk infecting its own trappers by contact with such rebellious spirits the firm allowed "as little intercourse as possible between them and our people." He asserted, with some lack of candor, that the concern's officers did not encourage the Americans to desert, although he admitted that there were then about ten or twelve "of their people in our Service." 370

Simpson's confidence was partly based on reports which reached him concerning the high rate of casualties suffered by the Americans in the Snake Country and elsewhere from Indian attacks, particularly by the Blackfeet. 371 The American Trappers have been exceedingly
unfortunate," he told the Company's secretary during November, 1828. 372 And indeed their casualties had been significant -- at least ninety-four men killed by the natives between 1823 and 1829. 373 Simpson attributed these high losses to the "indiscreet" conduct of the Americans which often turned friendly Indians into enemies. "It is a well known fact," he wrote, "that War parties frequently pass our Camps without offering the least annoyance; yet will haunt and watch an American Camp, for Days and Weeks, until a favorable opportunity occurs to make an attack." 374 He might also have mentioned the hard lesson taught the Blackfoot by McDonald and the fact that the British usually hunted in larger parties than the Americans.

Another reason for Simpson's optimism was the news received from Ogden that several American parties he had met "complained of the poverty" of the Snake Country and had suffered crippling losses of horses. 375 This impression of the seeming disarray of the American fur trade was reinforced by events at Flathead Post during the winter of 1828-1829. Two separate parties of Missouri trappers, one headed by Jedediah Smith's partner, David E. Jackson, and the other by a rival independent trader, Joshua Pilcher, reached the vicinity of the Company's post after relatively poor hunts. Both leaders were forced to sell the British a sizeable percentage of their furs in order to obtain the supplies required for a return to their bases. 376

Pilcher was so desperate, in fact, that he offered to trap for the Hudson's Bay Company on the headwaters of the Missouri where the British could not legally operate. Simpson may have suspected
a trap to get his concern in difficulties with the United States government, but snare or not he turned the proposal down with a pious and self-righteous declaration well designed to foil any attack on himself or his firm. "Although the protecting Laws of your Government might be successfully evaded by the plan you suggest," he replied to Filcher on February 18, 1829, "still I do not think it would be reputable in the Honble Hudsons Bay Coy to make use of indirect means to acquire possession of a Trade to which it has no just claim." 377

Simpson was also encouraged by the number of freemen who, after having deserted to the Americans, were returning to the Company's fold. A steep rise in the cost of goods at the American rendezvous between 1825 and 1827 had made it clear to many trappers, both British and American, that there was little money to be made in the mountains by the average common hunter, and the old concern, now that McLoughlin had reformed the freemen's terms, began to appear not so bad after all. 379

Orders were issued to John Work, a clerk in the Colvile District, to attempt to "draw off" any "late deserters found attached to American camps, particularly near Flathead Post. These men "need not be apprehensive of harsh treatment from us," Simpson told Work. Old debts would be settled "liberally," supplies would be sold "cheap," and "large prices" would be paid for furs. Work was further told that if any "respectable" American trappers wished to join the Snake expedition "there can be no objection if they deposit skins to cover the supplies they receive." 379 Clearly, if Simpson
was not actively soliciting Americans to desert neither was he discouraging them from doing so.

It was also realized by Simpson and McLoughlin, however, that an increase in the number of freemen at Flathead and in the Willamette Valley would cause problems for the concern. In the latter place, for example, the free hunters reduced the returns of Company parties operating from Fort Vancouver, and there was always the danger that furs gathered by these unattached men would be disposed of to American maritime traders along the lower Columbia rather than at the depot trade shop. In seeking a way out of this situation, Simpson hit upon an idea which slightly altered his previous concept of a proper future size for the Snake Expedition. On March 15, 1829, shortly before starting his return East, Simpson told McLoughlin that the brigade "should be increased to from 40 to 45 trappers if the Freemen expected from the Flat Heads can be induced to join -- otherwise kept at 30." Other freemen were to be recruited for expeditions going south from Fort Vancouver.

But the major change contemplated by Simpson for the Snake Brigade was in the leadership. For a couple of years notations in Ogden's journals had indicated that he suffered from occasional periods of illness, the nature of which is not clear. Evidently McLoughlin informed Simpson of Ogden's poor health, for on or before March 1, 1829, the governor told the London directors: "I am sorry to intimate, that the injury his constitution has sustained, by the privations and discomfort to which he has so long been exposed, will render it necessary to relieve him as soon as we can find a Gentleman
qualified to fill his place to advantage."³⁸²

By March 15, 1829, Simpson had found that qualified person. On that day he directed McLoughlin to appoint John Work as conductor of the Snake Expedition. Ogden was to be placed in charge of a strong post to be built at Nass on the Northwest Coast. Since the new establishment was to be erected the "next spring," it seems clear that Simpson intended Work to assume command of the Snake Brigade in the fall of 1829.³⁸³

The ink could scarcely have been dry on these instructions when word reached Fort Vancouver of two shocking developments at the mouth of the Columbia River. On the night of March 10, 1829, one of the Company's annual supply ships from London, the William and Ann, ran aground on the South Spit and by morning was a total loss. Not a soul on board survived. Among the dead were ten Hawaiians recruited at Oahu for service in the Columbia Department. Also lost was most of the vessel's cargo which contained a "good part" -- but not the larger part -- of the trade goods and supplies required for the department's operations during the business year beginning June 1, 1829 [Outfit 1829].³⁸⁴

The news of the second blow was received somewhat earlier. Toward the end of February the brig Owyhee from Boston had entered the river and soon began trading with the natives for furs. On March 10 she was joined by another vessel belonging to the same New England owner, the hermaphrodite brig Convoy.³⁸⁵ Immediately upon hearing of the arrival of the Owyhee, Chief Factor McLoughlin
went down the river in a small boat to learn her business. He was shocked to hear that one or the other of the American vessels would remain on the Columbia all summer or even longer trading for pelts and fishing for salmon. Previously McLoughlin had considered such maritime competitors "as merely coasters who put in to collect a few straggling skins." Now, he told the London directors, he was faced by opponents who "intended to sit down and contest the trade with us." 386

The Americans bartered their trade goods at a much lower tariff than that long employed by the Company. For example, they sold guns for six beaver pelts, whereas the British asked eighteen skins. McLoughlin at once lowered his prices, and trading parties were sent "in all directions" to intercept Indians bringing furs to the Americans. Fort George, abandoned since early 1825, was reactivated. 387 This competitive effort placed a great strain upon the Columbia Department's manpower, already low in numbers because of Simpson's economy measures. The loss of the William and Ann's crew and passengers made the situation worse.

To compound McLoughlin's difficulties, these twin disasters occurred at a time when Fort Vancouver was "without a months consumption of Goods" in its warehouses. 388 The trade war with the American vessels drained off this meager stock at a rapid rate, and without the William and Ann's cargo there was no way to replenish it immediately. The arrival of a second supply ship, the Ganymede, early in May with the remainder of the departmental outfit
somewhat eased the shortage but by no means ended it. 389

By March 24 Governor Simpson had decided that there would not be sufficient men or goods to establish Nass during the spring of 1830. 390 Thus Ogden would be free to return to the Snake Country. On that date Chief Factor McLoughlin ordered Chief Trader John Warren Dease, then at Flathead, to leave 10 lodges, 30 elk skins, 100 chevreuil [mule deer] skins, 60 "Appечемоns," 40 saddles, and 400 fathoms of pack cords at Walla Walla "for Mr Ogden." 391 All of these items were equipage required for a new Snake expedition. They were not needed to enable a returning one to get from Fort Nez Perceés to the departmental depot. It is clear, therefore, that Ogden was to make at least one more journey to the Snake Country.

Ogden had acquired no taste for the arduous and dangerous life he had led during his five expeditions into the heart of the Far West. The once fiery and adventurous youth who had joined the North West Company at the age of twenty, was now a mature man of thirty-nine with responsibility for a large family. Almost surely he had already begun to wish, as he said later, "for a life of greater tranquility." 392

But Ogden's reaction to word of his reappointment when he received it, probably during July at Walla Walla or at Fort Vancouver, is not known with certainty. Years afterwards he said only, "In 1829 I was appointed to explore the tract lying south of the Columbia, between that river and California." 393 He was drawn in that direction, he told Governor Simpson and the Council in 1831, because of his success on the Humboldt River during his previous
expedition and because of what the Indians there had told him of beaver farther south and west. In fact, so anxious was he to test this region that he had assured the Indians at the Humboldt Sink that "in three months they would see us again." Simpson had promised the London directors during March, 1829, that should the brigades of 1828-1829 "discover fresh hunting grounds . . . we shall take the necessary measures to occupy them." Evidently Ogden's journey of 1829-1830 was one of those measures.

In planning the route of his sixth Snake expedition, however, Ogden undoubtedly also had in mind what he had heard from Jedediah Smith in 1828 of the beaver resources of California's Central Valley. Certainly in his later accounts of his journey the British leader made reference to Smith's experiences in that general region, so he must have been well aware of where the American gathered the skins he later lost to the Indians on the Umpqua. Also, it is not to be supposed that the Company's officers, Ogden among them, were not anxious to exhaust this new field before Americans beat them to it. Governor Simpson must have had these factors in mind when he told the Governor and Committee on August 26, 1830, that Ogden's route would depend on what he discovered about "American Trappers, some of whom, under the direction of Our old opponents Smith Jackson and Siblit, are still straggling about the Snake Country."

Governor Simpson, Chief Factor McLoughlin, and Ogden himself realized perfectly well that this expedition would penetrate deep into Mexican territory. The prospect bothered them not a whit,
although Ogden was aware that if he approached the California settlements too closely he might be subjected to the same type of official harassment that Smith had suffered. The Company's cavalier attitude was well expressed by the "Little Emperor" when he told the London directors in March 1829: "in regard to the Territorial rights of the Mexican Republic, we follow the example of the Spanish functionaries on the Coast, and our opponents from the United States, by making no enquiries about them."398

Preparations for the 1829-1830 Snake expedition began long before Ogden reached Fort Vancouver toward the end of July, 1829. Early in March McLoughlin directed John W. Dease, manager of the Colvile District, to send forty bushels of wheat and corn to Walla Walla to be kept in storage for the Snake Brigade.399 Two weeks later Dease, as has been seen, was reminded that he was to have a supply of leather goods and saddles -- items ordinarily obtained from his subordinate post at the Flatheads -- ready at Walla Walla for the same purpose.400

Apparently McLoughlin had some difficulty in assembling that part of the outfit supplied by Fort Vancouver. When Ogden reached the post the American opposition on the lower Columbia was still placing a severe strain on the department's stock of goods. At that time the depot warehouses contained only a thousand blankets and ninety trading guns, and since these were the articles most desired by the Indians, they were flowing out rapidly as the Yankee traders kept driving up the price of furs.401 The situation was so tight
that McLoughlin had to let "Mr. Ogden's people" take his personal rifle. 402

But one way or another the party was equipped, and Ogden set out up the Columbia by boat, evidently on August 18, 1829. 403 He was at Fort Nez Percés by the twenty-ninth of the month, only to encounter additional difficulties. 404 Supplies which were to have been sent down from Fort Colvile for his use had not arrived due to a misunderstanding as to where Ogden was to pick them up. He reported this mishap to McLoughlin but in reply received only sympathy and the comment that it was "now too late to do anything in this business." 405 How Ogden solved this problem is not yet apparent, but evidently he did.

More serious was the fact that Chief Trader Samuel Black, in charge at Walla Walla, had been unable to buy enough horses from the Indians to equip the party. "As you suggest I think the best you can do is to go to Nez Percés Camp and trade all you can," McLoughlin advised Ogden. If sufficient horses could not be obtained to supply everyone the men who were not equipped would have to be left behind and sent down to Fort Vancouver. "It is certainly distressing to find after all the pains that have been taken to complete your Party that all our trouble should be lost from the want of Horses," the "Big Doctor" wrote to Ogden on September 6, "however I hope you will be more successful than you apprehend and that you will be able to take all your party with you." 406

The British ordinarily traded with the Nez Percés for horses in the vicinity of the present Lewiston, Idaho, at the junction of the
Snake and Clearwater Rivers; and Ogden wasted little time in taking himself there as is demonstrated by the fact that a letter from him received at Fort Vancouver was dated "River Leau Clare, Sept 17th."\textsuperscript{407} Evidently he did not succeed in obtaining all the horses he required on the first attempt. When he left the "shores of the Columbia" sometime in September at least three of his men were then or afterwards left behind -- two at Walla Walla and one who turned up by early October at Flathead Post.\textsuperscript{408} It is not certain that these men were detached because of a dearth of animals, but such a cause is not unlikely, since Ogden afterwards wrote: "It was late in October 1829 ere I finally succeeded on the South Branch of the Columbia [Snake River] in equipping my party with horses."\textsuperscript{409}

Strangely enough accurate news of the difficulties surrounding the start of Ogden's sixth Snake expedition seems to have been a long time in reaching the eastern headquarters of Governor Simpson, who usually was rather quickly aware of the important happenings in his vast domain. A full year after the brigade left Fort Vancouver Simpson informed the London directors that the latest word from Ogden was dated September 30, 1829, at which time "he was proceeding up the South branch of the Columbia with his expedition well fitted out with goods and ammunition and horses -- and in high spirits."\textsuperscript{410} One wonders who was misleading whom!

The journal and accounts Ogden kept during his sixth expedition were lost in the Columbia River while the party was returning to Fort Vancouver. Thus knowledge of the brigade's route and personnel
is largely confined to what can be gleaned from a couple of letters written by Ogden about eight months after his journey had ended and from several pages of his book, *Traits of American Indian Life and Character*, published anonymously in 1853. The account which can be pieced together from these and a few other sources is thin indeed, with many of the crucial points left uncertain and subject to varying interpretations. But at least the general outline of the journey seems reasonably clear.

If Ogden's memory served him correctly at the time he wrote his book, the party numbered thirty men when it left Fort Nez Percé. Kit Carson, the famous American frontiersman, was with Ewing Young's band of trappers from Taos when they met Ogden's brigade in California during the spring of 1830, and he recalled years later that the British company was "sixty men strong." Despite the fact that several writers have accepted Carson's figure, it seems probable that Ogden's estimate was closer to the truth. Undoubtedly, however, the entire company was considerably larger when women, children, and Indians were counted. But on this occasion the number was not swelled by Ogden's own family, which had been left behind at Fort Nez Percé.

From what Ogden told Governor Simpson and from his own later recollections it appears that the brigade moved out from Walla Walla to the Snake River where the period from the latter part of September until "late in October 1829" was spent trading horses from the natives. By the time sufficient animals had been acquired Ogden had almost
given up hope of making a fall hunt. In fact, he said, "I... would from the mountainous country I had to travel over almost [have] been justified in not starting" so late in the season. But he remembered his satisfactory hauls of beaver along the Humboldt River and what he had learned of the promising prospects of the country beyond the lower reaches of that stream so, "rather sanguine" in his expectations, he turned southward and headed with all possible speed for the sink of his "Unknown River."

During this journey through a bleak and inhospitable country, Ogden later recalled, "difficulties, many and greater than I had anticipated, began to crowd upon us... our sufferings and trials were truly great. There were times when we tasted no food, and were unable to discover water for several days together; without wood, we keenly felt the cold; wanting grass, our horses were reduced to great weakness, so that many of them died, on whose emaciated carcasses we were constrained to satisfy the intolerable cravings of our hunger, and as a last resource, to quench our thirst with their blood." These tribulations were endured for about a month, but the men persevered and finally reached Humboldt Sink. By that time it must have been late in November, and Ogden was disappointed to find the river and its outlet marsh and lake covered with ice and snow. "This then blasted all hopes of a fall hunt," he recalled somewhat more than a year later.

As the brigade had advanced toward the sink, signs of Indians had become numerous, and on the day the outlet was reached a party
of scouts traveling in advance of the main company came upon a band of about fifty natives, who quickly fled. The scouts succeeded in capturing two of the Indians and held them for interrogation by Ogden. "We treated them with all possible kindness, and by signs endeavoured to express our wishes," the brigade leader later wrote. The captives refused to act as guides but did provide "some partial information" about the route ahead. Seeing that nothing more was to be gained, Ogden gave them "a few baubles" and let them go. "Wild as deer, they were soon out of sight."\footnote{419}

Ogden, with his usual skepticism concerning Indian character, was not at all sure that his humane treatment of the prisoners would result in any reciprocal good feeling on the part of their fellow tribesmen. "In my opinion, which is founded on general experience," he stated, such kindnesses were "directly opposed to the attainment of the desired end."

"It is something to hazard the remark," he continued, "yet I will venture the opinion, that had it, on the first discovery of new countries, been resolved to treat the savages with the greatest severity, the eventual sacrifice of many lives on their own part would have been avoided, and the murderous blow averted from many an unfortunate victim, whose only offence has been the heaping of undeserved favours on wretches whose hearts were callous to the emotions of gratitude."\footnote{420} On this particular occasion, at least, Ogden was proved absolutely correct.

The next day the two former captives returned, "accompanied by a large body of men, who soon became very troublesome." In fact they
showed such intense curiosity about everything, particularly about
the manner in which the horses were secured and about the arrangements
of the guard, that Ogden ordered them cleared from the camp.

At dawn the next morning, in accordance with Ogden's "invariable
custom," he had "all the men aroused, the fires lighted, and the
horses collected in the camp; this being the hour that Indians always
fix upon for making their predatory attacks, it being then, as they
say, that men sleep most soundly." Thus all the men were fully awake
and preparing for a start when Ogden saw a "large body" of Indians
approaching. He later estimated that the natives numbered "not less
than four hundred," and he believed them "fully determined that we
should proceed no further." Since the Indians had appeared to
be friendly the day before, Ogden let them approach, but when the
natives hesitated in their advance as if expecting a hostile recep-
tion, he became suspicious.

His worst fears were soon confirmed when a "shower" of arrows
poured into camp. Three horses were wounded, and Ogden believed his
men escaped only because they were sheltered behind their "poor
beasts." This, said Ogden, "was too much for our forbearance," and
he ordered one of his hunters to return the fire with a rifle. A
native fell, and the remainder took flight. "This was sufficient as
a first lesson," Ogden later wrote, but he had little hope that the
effect would long endure.

Getting the brigade in motion, Ogden marched for six days on
"nearly a south and south west course," until he "discovered" a
"Fine large river but destitute of beaver." This stream was explored "from its sources" to its outlet in a "large salt lake." Almost surely he had found the present Walker River and Walker Lake in what is today western Nevada. Continuing, probably in a southeasterly direction for a time to avoid the rough terrain west and south of Walker Lake and then south as more open country was reached, Ogden found himself in what he termed "the great sandy desert of Great Salt Lake." And in truth this barren region did stretch eastward to the Great Salt Lake; it was the "Great Sandy Plain" traversed by Jedediah Smith in 1827 and undoubtedly described by him to Ogden at Fort Vancouver.

The brigade made its way south across the western fringes of this forbidding land during January, 1830. "We suffered severely both from the want of food and water; the party escaped with their lives but many of our horses died," Ogden later wrote. Relief, if it may be called that, came when the party reached "a range of rocky Mountains" -- probably the White Mountains or the Inyo Mountains, not far west of the present California-Nevada boundary. Deep snows and severe cold made the crossing dangerous and difficult, but the men broke through, perhaps by Westgard Pass, "without sustaining any loss."

Shortly thereafter they came to another large stream which emptied into a salt lake. If the identification of Ogden's route thus far has been approximately correct, these features almost certainly were today's Owens River and Owens Lake. It must be noted,
however, that some historians believe Ogden was far to the east at this time, on Sevier River and Sevier Lake in the present Utah.\textsuperscript{426}

From this point the evidence concerning the brigade's course is even more confusing. On March 12, 1831, months after his return to Fort Vancouver, Ogden reported to Governor Simpson and the Council on his route. He found no beaver near this new river and lake he reported, but the Indians nearby told him "that in a south west course I should find beaver." Thus he "continued on in the same direction; and in February I had the satisfaction of reaching the south west branch of the Rio Collarado which discharges in the Gulph of California. Here I found beaver very thinly scattered."\textsuperscript{427}

Several well qualified scholars have identified Ogden's "south west branch of the Rio Collarado" as the present Mojave River.\textsuperscript{428} It seems quite likely that the party did reach that stream and follow it eastward, but it appears improbable that Ogden would have called it a "branch" of the Colorado River. In the first place, the Mojave sinks in the desert long before reaching the Colorado, and there are no beaver along its banks and undoubtedly there were none in 1830.\textsuperscript{429}

The fact that the Mojave is not a tributary of the Colorado has caused some persons to believe that Ogden did not reach the Colorado or even descend the Mojave to its sink.\textsuperscript{430} On the other hand, Ogden distinctly stated on more than one occasion that he reached or almost reached the Gulf of California. During March, 1831, he wrote to his friend John McLeod that during his 1829-1830 expedition, "I extended my trails . . . to the Gulph of California but found beaver very scarce."\textsuperscript{431} Upon his return to Fort Vancouver on July 6, 1830, Ogden
told McLoughlin that from the "unknown or Ogdens River" he went "south to the Rio Colorado which he descended till nigh the Gulph of California." In view of these positive declarations, together with the fact that beaver were and are still to be found along the lower Colorado River, it would appear unsafe to assume that Ogden did not reach that stream and descend it to or nearly to the Gulf of California. Unless additional information — such as the report Ogden is known to have written after his return to Fort Vancouver and prior to October 11, 1830 — turns up, this question and, indeed, most others concerning the exact route of his sixth expedition will have to remain subjects of speculation.

Somewhere south of Humboldt Sink — Ogden's statement that the distance was only a three days' march south of that point cannot possibly be correct — and after traveling through a land "as barren as ever Christian traversed," the brigade encountered a group of Indians "residing on the waters of the Rio Colorado." Probably this meeting occurred on the Mojave River or even on the Colorado itself. Ogden, who had been well briefed by Jedediah Smith, suspected that these natives were the Mojaves who treacherously attacked the American's party as it was crossing the Colorado River during the summer of 1827 and massacred ten men.

The British trappers were "eager" to revenge this savage slaughter, but Ogden was not completely certain that he was facing the guilty parties. For one thing, the Indians who attacked Smith had possessed horses, and Ogden could find no hoof prints in the
vicinity. \(^{435}\) Therefore, though still wary, he refused to let his men take the offensive.

The next day, Ogden later recounted, the Indians "swarmed about the camp, every man carrying, in addition to his proper arms, a long stick on his shoulder, in derision of the manner in which we carry our guns." Alarmed by this insolence and by the large number of the natives, Ogden put his party on the alert. An extra guard was posted over the horses, and each man was given a "spear" to augment his usual weapons, with orders that if attacked they were not to reload after firing but were to charge immediately at the attackers. Then a few Indians were admitted to the camp in the hope that sight of this preparedness would dissuade their companions from undertaking any hostile action. "Unhappily for them," said Ogden, "the desired effect was not produced."

Shortly thereafter the Indians attempted to drive off the brigade's horses, wounding a guard in the process. "This was sufficient for me," said Ogden. He ordered his men to fire. Twenty-six Indians "were made to lick the dust." and the remainder fled. No charge with the spears was required, as no opponents could be found.

Apparently it was following this incident that Ogden turned north and "crossed over to the South Branch of the Bonaventura" -- the present San Joaquin River in the Central Valley of California. \(^{437}\) On the way he avoided the Mexican towns and ranches toward the coast,
"not wishing," as he said, "in case of accidents of going too near the Spanish settlements."\(^{438}\) But the route by which he entered the San Joaquin Valley remains in doubt. Currently historians seem to favor Tehachapi Pass, although Walker Pass has long had its advocates.\(^{439}\) In truth there seems to be no hard evidence favoring either theory.

In any case, Ogden was undoubtedly correct when he later said that the brigade trapped the San Joaquin River "from its sources" north to its outlet in San Francisco Bay. While moving down the valley in that spring of 1830 Ogden's trappers took 1000 beaver. He soon had reason to believe himself fortunate to have made such a good hunt, for near the mouth of the river he was overtaken by a party of American fur hunters under the command of Ewing Young. This group of about twenty men from New Mexico, "well loaded with traps," had descended the Great Valley hard on Ogden's heels, and if they had been ahead of him they would have ruined the hunt of the Hudson's Bay brigade.\(^{440}\)

The meeting appears to have been a reasonably friendly one. Evidently neither party was willing to let the other get ahead, so for ten days they "kept company" while they traveled up "the North branch of the Bonaventura" -- today's Sacramento River -- as far as its junction with Pit River.\(^{441}\) If Ogden took notice of a stocky young man named Christopher Carson in Young's party he made no mention of it. Trapping was poor as the companies worked northward, and the reason was soon evident. They came upon the track made by
Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod's brigade during its expedition from Fort Vancouver to the Central Valley of California in 1829. McLeod reported that he had "drained" the region of beaver, a claim with which Ogden and Young could well agree. 442

By the time the Pit River was reached, Young and his trappers were disgusted with the prospects ahead. "Empty handed," they gave up their plan to test the Willamette region and turned back to try their fortune once more in the more central portions of California. 443 With them or joining them soon afterwards was one of Ogden's men whose name has not yet been determined. 444

Ogden now found that Pit River, which he had named and partially explored during his 1826-1827 journey, was the "north branch of the Boreantura [Buenaventura]," and indeed it is the main stream of the Sacramento River although it does not bear that name above its junction in Shasta Lake with the smaller branch today called the Upper Sacramento. 445

"On reaching Pitt River," Ogden reported, "I was no longer a stranger to the country." 446 He followed the stream in a northwest direction, retracing his earlier track from about the present Canby to at least Goose Lake and probably on to Malheur Lake. 447 All that is known for certain about his route beyond the source of Pit River is that he went "from thence to Walla Walla." 448 It is quite likely, however, that from Malheur Lake he turned almost directly north and made his way up Silvies River, then over the upper drainage of the John Day River, and across the Umatilla River along a general line
employed by John Work in 1831 and again in the summer of 1832. Home base was reached on June 30, 1830.449

Although Ogden was relieved to arrive "in safety" he wasted no time in resting. Leaving his horses at Fort Nez Percés, he embarked in a "crazy boat" placed at his disposal and started down the Columbia with some of his men and part of his returns. All went well until July 3 when he reached The Dalles, one of the river's most formidable rapids where, Ogden wrote years later, "the mighty waters roll along with irresistible fury."450

Despite the terrifying appearance of the torrent, the Company's voyageurs did not ordinarily consider the place particularly dangerous. A portage was made around the worst rapid, and the boat was returned to the water at its base. Ogden had planned to eat breakfast at this spot, but the odor of rotting salmon was so offensive that he designated another location farther downstream for this "important event of the day." Sending his party ahead in the boat to make preparations, he started to walk to the appointed place. At least one other member of the party also continued on foot. He was that grand old freeman of the Willamette, Alexander Carson, who at the last moment was replaced in the boat by another American, Bache Goodrich, to "run the rapid."451

Ogden watched the boat set out bravely from shore, but to his horror the craft was quickly caught in a whirlpool. Accounts differ as to what happened next. Ogden later said that the men "bent to their oars with redoubled energy," but were powerless to escape from
the "whirling vortex." Chief Factor McLoughlin reported only a few months after the tragedy that the boatmen lost "their presence of mind" and dropped their paddles. In any case, the stern was sucked down, the prow rose in the air, and there was one last cry of terror from the occupants. The boat spun helplessly until it disappeared completely under the swirling waters.

Only one man, "poor Baptiste," the steer's man, managed to save himself. He grasped four empty kegs which had been lashed together and was fortunate enough to be washed ashore several miles downstream. The remaining nine men in the boat were drowned, together with the wife of Joseph Portneuf and her two children. Among the dead were several of the most valuable veterans of the Snake Country expeditions, including Antoine Sylvaille, Joseph Portneuf, and Joseph Grenier. Also lost were Ogden's journal, all his papers, and between 300 and 500 beaver pelts.

Half an hour after the accident the boat brigade from Fort Vancouver bringing the annual outfits for the interior posts arrived on the scene. These craft passed over the site of the disaster "in perfect safety," and McLoughlin seems to have believed that Ogden's boat could have done the same had the crew kept their heads. There was little the newcomers could do except to help in searching for possible survivors and in recovering the bodies of the dead, though some of the latter were found only after "long intervals." It is not known how Ogden completed his journey, but he reached the depot on July 6, 1839.
The returns from Ogden's sixth and last Snake expedition amounted to only 1295 large and small beaver, 90 land otter, and a few other miscellaneous furs. McLoughlin was disappointed by these results, as was Ogden himself, but the Columbia manager put the best possible face on the situation. "The country visited last winter by Mr. Ogden is the poorest in Furs that he had hitherto explored as your honors will see by the diminution of his Returns," McLoughlin explained to the London directors, "but as it was a new country we could not know how it was Stocked in Beaver till we had explored it." He pointed out that Ogden had examined the territory between the Columbia River on the north and the Colorado River and California on the south, except for a strip along the coast and some of the region between the Klamath River and San Francisco Bay.

All this knowledge, he seems to have implied, was reward enough for the expense of the expedition.

Ogden was more apologetic. "Although our returns were one third less than last year," he wrote to the Governor and the Council on March 12, 1831, "I trust from the extent of country I explored the want of returns will not be attributed to want of exertions but alone to the poverty of the country over which I have no control."

McLoughlin's appraisal proved in the long run to be correct. Ogden's expedition, besides being a remarkable journey of discovery, demonstrated to the Company that the region south of Humboldt Sink was poor in beaver even though Ogden himself wished to make another attempt to test it. But the most important results of Ogden's last journey to the Snake Country related to California. On February 13,
1830, Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod had returned to Fort Vancouver after a disastrous trapping expedition to the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys during 1829. His "report of the country and the difficulties to which a party could be exposed in hunting it," caused Governor Simpson in 1831 to decide to abandon further trapping brigades to California. But when he learned that Ogden had been able to collect 1000 beaver along the San Joaquin and, above all, that American trappers were operating in the region, he was galvanized to action. The "fur desert" was not yet desert enough in that direction. He reversed himself in the summer of 1832 and decided to continue trapping in the Central Valley.

Word that Ogden had found the Snake Country "much exhausted and still overrun by American Trappers" also caused Governor Simpson concern. The returns, he told the London directors, "are less in value and quantity than any we have had from that quarter but the Expedition still pays tolerably well, and it is our intention to keep it constantly employed while it clears its expenses."

When Ogden returned to Fort Vancouver he learned that the London Committee had approved his appointment to head the party to establish a post at Nass. The Snake Country, on which he had so indelibly marked his stamp, was to see him no more. Several place names in today's Utah commemorate his pioneer entrance into Ogden Valley in 1825, and if it had not been for John C. Frémont the Humboldt River, which Ogden added to the map, probably would be called Ogden River today. As one historian has said, "he led large
fur brigades over more territory than any other man, with the possible exception of Jedediah Smith. Except for the region south of the Humboldt, which Ogden had hoped to investigate on a future expedition, and a few fringe areas, the Snake Country was well known to trappers by the middle of 1830. The exploring responsibilities of the Snake Brigade were largely over.

John Work -- loyal, able, and perpetually discontented -- was still available to replace Ogden in the Snake Country. On March 20, 1830, Chief Factor McLoughlin directed Work to relinquish his management of the Colvile District and to report to Fort Vancouver as soon as the business of transferring his command could be completed. He was to bring with him "the horses from the different places," so he probably was some weeks in reaching the depot. Evidently he was at headquarters when Ogden returned from California early in July.

Ogden's reaction to the news that he was to be superseded as head of the Snake Party seems to have been relief for himself mixed with sympathy for Work. He later wrote to a colleague: "Our friend Work has succeeded me in the Snake country . . . . surely this man deserves a more substantial reward than he now enjoys it is an unpleasant situation he fills. I wish him every success but it is all a lottery."467

Ogden's tired men had more of a rest at Fort Vancouver than McLoughlin had intended because Work, who was to take them back to the field, was delayed in starting upriver by the nonarrival of a
On July 28, 1830, Chief Trader McLeod reached the depot with the remainder of his Southern Expedition, and some of his men were detailed to fill out the Snake Brigade. Thus strengthened, Work's party finally got under way on August 4. Ogden went along to assist with the final arrangements at Fort Nez Percés. 

The company reached Walla Walla on August 15, and a few days were spent in outfitting with horses, appcheemons, and other necessities which had been assembled there by McLoughlin's order. On the twentieth the men were sent off to the foot of the Blue Mountains while Work remained at the post to complete his paper work.

It was Governor Simpson's intention that Work's route should be determined, as had Ogden's in 1829-1830, by what he could learn about activities of American trappers. But Chief Factor McLoughlin had something more definite in mind. As early as July 13, 1830, he knew that Work would be stopping in the vicinity of the Big Wood River, north of the Snake, for a short hunt. At Walla Walla on August 21 Ogden gave Work a long letter of advice concerning the forthcoming expedition. "You having requested my opinion relating to the route you should take . . . as I am not authorized to give you instructions I shall merely state the track I had intended following had I returned," he wrote. But although this delicately put in the form of suggestions, it is almost certain that his proposals reflected the desires of the "Big Doctor" at departmental headquarters. Ogden advised Work to go to the Boise River and the Big Wood River, from there to the Salmon River if the weather
permitted, then to the Snake River, Bear River, and the Humboldt River, and then to explore south of the latter stream to see if another river reported by Indians actually existed. The return should be by way of the Owyhee River.\footnote{473}

Work, still only a clerk in rank but destined to be a Chief Trader before the year was out, left Fort Nez Percés on August 22, 1830, and that same day joined his brigade in the Walla Walla Valley. He found his party to be made up of, in addition to himself, 37 men, 1 male Indian slave and 2 youths, making 41 persons bearing arms; 29 women, 22 boys, and 23 girls, a total of 114 "Souls."\footnote{474} Most of the men were Canadians, but there were two Americans, six halfbloods, two Iroquois, and one Nippissing Indian. The 272 horses and mules were "pretty well laden" with 21 lodges, provisions for the first part of the journey, and 337 traps.\footnote{475}

At the outset Work followed the well-trodden brigade trail south over the Blue Mountains and via the Grande Ronde, Powder River, and Burnt River to the Snake. The company then ascended the south bank of the Snake for about thirty miles and camped preparatory to crossing. On September 7 the veteran American trapper, Alexander Carson, and five men were detached to hunt the Weiser and Payette Rivers and to "cross the Mountains" to trap "some of the branches of Salmon River." They were instructed to return to Walla Walla by early July, 1831.\footnote{476}

The next day the main party, which Work considered still strong enough to resist the expected Blackfoot raiders, forded to the north
side of Snake River and followed it to the Fayette River, which was ascended a short distance. Work then crossed southeasterly to the Boise River, striking it somewhere near today's Middleton, Idaho. Hunting was not very productive along the Payette and the Boise, so Work left the latter stream above the site of the present Boise and traveled eastward across the Snake Plain to Camas Prairie and then on to Willow Creek. Here four men visiting their traps were ambushed by a band of Blackfeet. Two were killed and one was wounded. In addition, this same marauding band had by then stolen twenty-five traps, and the brigade was to be harassed by these horse-hungry, blood-thirsty raiders for weeks to come.

Work reached Wood River on September 28, 1830. Trapping was fair on this stream, and the company remained along its lower course for almost two weeks. But then they encountered a group of American Fur Company men under Joseph Robidoux. Work's object at this time was "to reach Salmon River with as little delay as possible," but he was not anxious to lead the American rivals there. Thus on October 12 he struck out northeastward over the plain in the direction of Big Lost River, hoping to escape Robidoux who had already started north up Wood River. But when the Americans saw where the Company men were headed, they followed in Work's track. To evade the competition, Work turned northward into the mountains and reached Big Lost River in the general vicinity of the present Darlington, Idaho. From here the route was northwesterly to the Salmon River near the present Challis.
Crossing the Salmon, several days were wasted beating about the rugged country to the west where Alexander Ross had found such unproductive hunting in 1824. Finding the going rough and fearing the onslaught of winter, Work ordered a retreat. The party descended Salmon River as far as the Lemhi River and then turned south up the latter stream. Winter had now arrived with a vengeance, and trapping was poor in the iced-over waters. From the upper Lemhi the party crossed the divide through two feet of snow to reach Birch Creek on the last day of November, 1830.

Hoping to find buffalo to feed his hungry people and grass for the horses, Work turned westward by Pass Creek to Little Lost River, which was descended to its sinks. A number of buffalo were killed on the way, and good feed for the animals was found near the sinks of Big Lost River. Continuing southward across the Snake Plain the brigade reached the Snake River near today's Blackfoot, Idaho, on December 17. For several weeks the trip had been hard on the horses, and a number died from cold and fatigue before reaching the good grass near Ogden's old winter quarters in the vicinity of Perry Butte. And here, on the south (or east) bank, Work remained for three months, moving camp occasionally as grass and wood became exhausted.

The winter of 1830-1831 was unusually severe throughout the Snake Country, and Work's company suffered greatly from the cold. Buffalo were reasonably plentiful, but they were lean because deep or hard-crusted snow made it difficult for them to feed. By the end of March these beasts, so valuable to the fur traders and trappers,
were dying in large numbers. The same harsh conditions so weakened the brigade's horses that they were nearly useless for hunting buffalo. The camp was almost constantly harassed by Indian horse thieves, who managed to make off with a number of animals. By the end of March the buffalo were in such bad condition and so difficult to reach that the party was "much in want" of fresh food. "For some time past," Work noted on March 30, the people "have been living on their small stock of dry provisions which had been provided for the journey. this I much regret as it will cause loss of time to replace it." 477

The most exciting event of the winter was the arrival on April 14, 1831, of fifty-seven American Fur Company trappers under the command of Lucien Fontanelle and Andrew Dripps. They were passing from their winter quarters on the Bear and Logan Rivers to the upper Snake and Flathead regions. "Our people," Work wrote in his journal, "are like to be devoured by the American freemen who seem to be starving, and ready to give anything they have got to procure a little dried meat." 478

Two of Work's men wished to desert and join the Americans. Fontanelle refused to have anything to do with them unless they settled their accounts with Work and paid their debts to the Company. Since the would-be deserters were freemen, Fontanelle told them they could expect no supplies from him. This honorable conduct was much appreciated by Work. "Were people who have to deal with these scoundrels in this country to act mutually in a similar manner to Mr. Fontanelle there would be much less difficulty with roguish men," he wrote. 479
This firm stand discouraged one of the discontents but the other, Baptiste Tyaquariche, insisted on leaving and paid fifteen beaver which nearly cleared his debt. But when Baptiste started to take a Company horse with him, giving in its place one he had left with nearby Indians, Work seized the loaded animal to hold it back. Some of the Iroquois in the American party came to the aid of Baptiste, upon which several of Work's companions took up their guns. A bloody clash was narrowly averted, and Work retained the horse. But it had been a close call.480

On April 19 the Company's Snake Expedition raised camp and started southward up Bannock Creek but on reaching its upper waters found there was too much snow for trapping and even for further progress in that direction. Retreating to Snake River, the men found quite satisfactory trapping as far down as American Falls and on to Raft River. The latter stream was ascended for the purpose of killing buffalo and drying the meat as well as hunting beaver.

Near the headwaters of Raft River Work split his party on May 12, 1831. Veteran Charles Plante was placed in charge of seven men and sent westward to hunt on the Owyhee River's eastern fork, the present Blue Creek. Work with the main company intended to go in a more southerly direction to reach the Humboldt River and then to go on to the upper Owyhee River. Entering the Great Basin on the thirteenth, he reached the plain of Great Salt Lake and the next day struck "Mr. Ogden's usual road to Ogden's river [the Humboldt]."

This trail was followed westwardly until, on May 22 at Snow Water Lake, he deviated to the northwest "in hopes to reach the
[Humboldt] river sooner and fall upon it a few days march higher up than by the usual route."481

The East Fork of the Humboldt between the present Wells and Death, Nevada, was reached the next day. Work next moved northward to another branch, Marys River, which the party ascended only to find the trapping poor. Crossing into the Snake drainage, they reached Bruneau River but soon left it and went westward to the South Fork of the Owyhee River at the site of the present Wild Horse Reservoir. Work found this region "a very poor country."

Both beaver and game were scarce, and provisions were running low. No Indians were seen, so not even a few roots, "bad as they are," could be obtained to feed the hungry.

Work quickly removed himself from this inhospitable land and moved south to the North Fork of the Humboldt River. Before doing so, however, he detached seven men to continue down the Owyhee River to the Snake and then take the outward trail back to Walla Walla. "These men," he noted, "are all half Indians, some of them with large families, and placing too much reliance on their capability as hunters did not take so much precaution as the other men to provide a stock of food previous to leaving the buffalo, they are therefore now entirely out of provisions and it is expected they will have a better chance of killing Antelopes & chivereau [deer] when only a few than when the camp are altogether."482

Instead of following down the North Fork of the Humboldt, Work crossed to the upper waters of another branch of the Owyhee. Not finding many beaver here, he again turned southward and at last
reached the Humboldt near the present Carlin, Nevada, on June 17. Mosquitoes in "innumerable swarms" made life miserable for both men and horses. The animals were so tormented that they could not feed even after a long march without grass. Most of the people were so low on provisions that "they now have no other resource but to kill horses."

The party moved down the river, but the water was so high that only one beaver was caught. Mosquitoes and sand flies made life almost unbearable, and without other food two men each slaughtered one of their horses. Discouraged, Work left the Humboldt east of today's Winnemucca on June 21 and cut across to the Little Humboldt River.

After ascending this latter stream for a day, Work turned westward and reached Quinn River. Following up the Quinn to near its source, the party turned northwestwardly to the foot of Steen Mountain. During all this journey grass was extremely scarce, and the men were forced to kill more horses, "the companions of their labours." Work continued northward along the eastern base of Steens Mountain for about twenty-eight miles and then cut across the range to Malheur Lake. From this point the route back to Fort Nez Percés was roughly the well-known one up Silvies River, across to the John Day River, and then over the Blue Mountains.

Work and an advance party reached Walla Walla on July 18, 1831. All the groups he had detached during the expedition had already arrived or came in within two days. Alexander Carson's company had lost all their horses and a pack and a half of beaver pelts to Indian
thieves. "The loss was the result of a great degree of negligence," Work recorded with anger. Two more animals had been stolen from the party of mixed-bloods he had sent off from the upper Owyhee River early in June. These men also made "very few beaver." Plante's detachment could only report a similar poor hunt. All in all, the brigade had experienced the loss of eighty-two horses. Work was thoroughly disgusted.

Neither was he pleased with the financial results of his expedition. "My last campaign in the Snake country was not so successful as I had anticipated," he wrote to a friend on September 6, 1831; "the returns and profits were nevertheless pretty fair considering the exhausted state of the country and the great severity and unusual length of the winter." But he had something for which to be thankful. "I escaped with my scalp last year," he added. "I much doubt whether I shall be so fortunate this time." 483

McLoughlin was not overjoyed either, but ever since March 8 when he had received Work's November report from the field, he had been prepared for bad news, though he had long been hopeful of better results. Work had reported taking 700 pelts up to November 12, 1830, a number which the gentlemen at Fort Vancouver considered a "fair commencement." 485

McLoughlin interpreted Work's November letter as further proof that the Snake Country was "nearly exhausted." 486 But the "Big Doctor" was not ready to give up on the region. In February, 1830, he had said that "Columbia beaver sells higher per skin than any in
Many of those skins came from the Snake Country, and McLoughlin was determined to send Work back to get more of them.

With this objective in mind, McLoughlin told Chief Trader Simon McGillivray at Fort Nez Percés on May 10, 1831, to trade "all the Horses you can as you may depend Mr Work will want more this year than he did last." This admonition was repeated on August 3, with the added detail that Work would require about 130 horses in addition to the survivors from the 1830-1831 expedition.

Work and his party brought their furs down to Fort Vancouver by early August. The discouraged bourgeois must have been somewhat heartened by receiving from Dr. McLoughlin his commission as a Chief Trader. But if Work experienced a moment of cheer, it did not last long. Malaria was raging at the depot, and a number of his people came down with the fever, some so severely that they had to remain behind. "This I much regret," he told a friend, "as my numbers at first were too weak."

On August 18, 1831, Chief Trader Work left Fort Vancouver bound for his second Snake expedition. He stopped the first night at the Company's sawmill, a few miles above the depot, to join his men who had been sent there for their regales. The next morning the men had sobered up enough to get started up the Columbia in four boats. As the journey progressed more and more people became ill until "every boat was like a hospital." At one point Work believed that he would not be able to reach Walla Walla, but after strenuous efforts on the part of those still able to function the boats arrived there on August 30.
A week was spent at Fort Nez Percés collecting and distributing horses, giving out supplies and provisions, and allowing the sick to recuperate. Not only was the number of horses deficient, but the quality of those available was so inferior that Work believed "little or no work can be expected to be done with them." Most of the sick men insisted on starting even though Work predicted that the worst of them would be "inadequate" for the journey and would "most likely die on the way." In the end, though, only three had to be left behind. The armament of the company included one "cannon."

On September 8 and 9 the main company got under way up the Walla Walla Valley. The number of persons in the party was not mentioned in Work's journals, but the names of fifty-five different men are mentioned from time to time in that record. Apparently some recruits had been found at Fort Nez Percés. In addition, there were the usual families, among them Work's three small daughters. The children were brought along despite the fact that Work predicted before his departure that he would be visiting "a much more dangerous part of the country than ... we passed last year," and that his party would be "too weak for the undertaking."

Work himself left Fort Nez Percés on September 11, 1831, and caught up with his brigade that same day. The whole party moved off together the next morning.

If there exists a clear statement of Work's instructions it has not yet been seen by the present writer. It seems evident, however, that Work, both from the field and when he was at Fort Vancouver, had expressed his opinion to Dr. McLoughlin that the
southern portion of the Snake Country had been so thoroughly stripped of beaver by both the British and the Americans that it would "not afford employment for a Party sufficiently strong to protect themselves."496 "The Blackfoot and Flathead lands," he told a friend just before leaving Walla Walla, "... is the only quarter now where there is a likelihood of making anything."497

McLoughlin evidently agreed with this suggestion to try hunting north of the Salmon River, but he saw a danger. "The Lands laying north of the Flatheads, which Mr. Work mentions, I believe, are on the East side of the Mountains" -- in other words in United States territory where it was illegal for the British to hunt -- he told Governor Simpson in March, 1831. "If South of 49 [degrees] we cannot go there," he added, "and if North of 49 I think we ought not to go." He did imply, however, that prospects for a profitable hunt elsewhere were dim. Still, on September 9, 1831, he reminded Chief Trader Heron at Fort Colville, who was planning to dispatch some traders with the annual hunting party of the Flatheads, "that the Honble Committee has directed that we are not to send any of our people South of 49 on the East side of the mountains."498

Yet Work, when he left Fort Nez Percés, knew he was "starting for the borders of the Blackfoot and Flathead lands."499 And he later admitted in his journal that he intended to visit "several branches of the Missouri."500 One can only conclude that McLoughlin and Work believed that a profitable hunt would soothe the Committee's ire.
During the first part of his journey Work named very few of the streams he encountered or places he camped. And he may have misnamed the one large river which could have provided the key to his route. He said he followed the Salmon River for a considerable distance, but at least one knowledgeable historian believes this stream may actually have been the Clearwater.501

At any rate, it seems agreed that he went in a generally eastward direction from Walla Walla, crossed the Snake River, and from there made his way to a large opening he called "Camass Plains" not far from the present Kamiah, Idaho. The Indian track used by Lewis and Clark and known later as the Lolo Trail had its western terminus in this general area, and Work's brigade struggled eastward along this ancient route, battling through snow and dense woods, and climbing up and down steep slopes and along ridge tops until the Bitterroot Range was crossed. On October 13, 1831, Work and his exhausted followers reached Lolo Hot Springs in the present Montana, the first point during the journey which can be positively identified.

The company proceeded down Lolo Creek, and in this vicinity beaver began to be caught, evidently for the first time since leaving Walla Walla. When the Bitterroot River was reached, Work turned down it to the Clark Fork of the Columbia at Hell's Gate near the present Missoula. The latter stream was ascended a few miles to the entrance of the Blackfoot River, the course of which was followed, though not always closely, eastward to the general vicinity of the present Ovando, Montana. On the way Work was discouraged to learn from the
Flatheads that both Indians and Americans had been trapping in the region ahead of him, including on several branches of the Missouri "which we intended to visit." Indifferent returns soon proved this information to be only too true.

Hoping to improve their fortunes in a region rumored to be rich in beaver, the men planned to turn northeast up a branch stream even though it would lead them into "the Blackfoot country" known to be "very dangerous." On October 31 the hunters and trappers scattered to their various tasks. Three of the men were surprised by a party of Blackfeet. Two of them were killed, and the other had a very narrow escape. The same band of marauders stole a number of traps, three horses, and three guns -- a serious loss to the brigade.

The next day Work noted in his journal: "Buried the remains of our unfortunates who came to such an untimely end yesterday by the hands of the inhuman, murderous Blackfeet." It is little wonder that his men henceforth attacked almost every Blackfoot they saw.

Work now gave up the idea of going north and turned southeast and reached Clark Fork once more. The march was continued up that stream southward past the vicinity of the present Deer Lodge, Montana, and War springs to Deer Lodge Pass. On November 10, 1831, the brigade crossed this easy gap and entered the Missouri River drainage, where it had no legal right to trap or trade. Hunting continued, however, as the party reached the Big Hole River and worked it way downstream to about five miles below the present Melrose. Leaving the Big Hole, Work led his men southward to the
Beaverhead River near the famed Lewis and Clark and fur-trader landmark, Beaverhead Rock, downstream from the present Dillon.

By that time many of the smaller streams were closed by ice, and trapping was largely unproductive. Grass for the horses had been scarce, but buffalo provided enough food for the men. Work proceeded a short distance up the Beaverhead, going slowly to take advantage of some good grass which had escaped the buffalo. Blackfeet were seen as was expected, since one of their main routes of travel passed this way. "There is little necessity for our hurrying on," Work commented, "as the danger from the Blackfeet is the same wherever we can go." 505

While the brigade was camped near the present Dillon on the night of November 23-24, a band of Blackfeet attacked the men guarding the horses and attempted to stampede the herd. Disaster was prevented by the brave action of a guard named Champagne, who succeeded in turning the animals. At the same time the Indians fired into the main camp, but they retreated when Work discharged his cannon in their direction. One of the guards was dangerously wounded during the fray but eventually recovered.

The march was continued on November 27. The company moved up the Beaverhead River to the site of the present Amstead, Montana. From there the route was westerly up Horse Prairie Creek and its upper waters. On December 11, a few miles west of the present Brenner, a party of Blackfeet was observed near camp. Some of Work's men went in pursuit and drove the Indians into a willow thicket where
they could not be seen. The trappers poured fire into the hiding place all day long, but when night came the natives escaped, though perhaps not without casualties.

On December 15, Ogden's band crossed Lemhi Pass, leaving the Missouri drainage behind. The Lemhi River, a branch of the Salmon, was soon reached. Work had hoped to find buffalo in this region, but neither the Flatheads nor the American trappers who were along the Salmon in force were doing much more than staying alive. Disgusted, Work turned southward up the Lemhi. By New Year's Day, 1832, the cold weather had moderated, and buffalo became more plentiful. Work allowed his men to rest for the holiday and enjoy the "dram and some cakes" he passed out in the morning.

From the general vicinity of the present Leadore, Idaho, Work once more turned northeastward, and on January 5, 1832, he recrossed the Continental Divide through Bannock Pass and was again on the upper waters of the Missouri River, and in United States territory. He was now back on Horse Prairie Creek, which he descended to the narrows near the present Brenner. Here the British and some Flathead Indians with them got into a fire fight with about twenty Blackfeet. The latter retreated into the same thicket that had sheltered their fellow tribesmen in late November; and as in that case the quarry escaped during the night. Work marveled that most of them got away unscathed. "The willows were completely lashed with the balls," he noted. He regretted that the "whole of them" had not been killed.506

Work's objective now was to find buffalo to provide provisions for the homeward journey. After a short detour up Red Rock Creek,
he retraced his fall track, going down the Beaverhead to below today's Dillon. Buffalo were encountered in large numbers in the region, and much meat was obtained. But also the Blackfoot raiders became bold and troublesome. On two successive nights they managed to get away with horses. Finally, at dawn on January 30, while the brigade seemingly was camped on Birch Creek, about three hundred Blackfeet, yelling and firing their guns, attacked. The trappers and the Indians who were traveling with them returned the fire so effectively that the Blackfeet pulled back to the woods and hills surrounding the camp. A brisk fire was exchanged until noon, when the attackers left the field. Work thought it the better part of valor not to pursue such a numerous force. The defenders lost one Flathead Indian killed and three natives wounded, one trapper fatally wounded and another seriously wounded, and Work's "little W[alla] W[alla] I[n]d[ian] house-keeper" dangerously wounded. 507 Another man and Work himself were slightly wounded.

The Blackfeet continued to steal horses. "They were so numerous," the bourgeois later told a friend, "I was able to make no hunt." 508 It was quite evident that the Blackfeet had forgotten the lesson given them by McDonald in 1823; they were now attacking the British and the Americans indiscriminately.

Giving up the unprofitable struggle against these foes and against the snows and severe cold of the upper Missouri, Work turned back and slowly followed his path back across Bannock Pass to the Lemhi Valley. The Lemhi was reached on March 10, 1832.
Work's immediate need was for buffalo meat, but his horses were so worn down that the men frequently could not get close to their quarry. During the brigade's march northward down the Lemhi, a youth of the party ate some hemlock root by mistake and died. A short distance from the mouth of the Lemhi Work turned west and crossed over to Salmon River, which he struck about six miles south of the present city of Salmon.

At this point a "small skin canoe" was built or otherwise obtained, and on March 26 four men started down Salmon River bound for Fort Nez Percés. "It is expected they will make a good hunt," Work wrote in his journal, "as this part of the river is not known to have ever been hunted by whites." Work had the impression that "Lewis and Clark passed down this in canoes." He had forgotten, if he ever knew, that Clark had scouted down this "River of No Return" and had decided against braving its fearsome rapids. This rash venture ended in disaster. Two of the men were drowned, and the other two, who were walking along the shore when the canoe was wrecked, finally reached Walla Walla "quite naked."

Work and the main party proceeded upstream through the Salmon River Gorge to the hot spring near the present Challis, Idaho. Then the brigade left the Salmon and traveled southeast to Big Lost River. It had been Work's intention to cross westward to the upper Big Wood River, but there was too much snow on the intervening mountains. Thus he descended Big Lost River, moving slowly to trap and hunt buffalo, and then passed westward along the base of the mountains at the northern edge of the Snake Plains. The yields of
beaver were reasonably good considering how intensively this area
had been trapped. At Big Wood River there was still too much snow
to cross the mountains to the upper Salmon drainage, so Work decided
to attempt an approach from the southwest. "Perhaps we may find
another road by Read's River [Boise River] to cross the mountains," he remarked in his journal. "The head of Read's River is not known
to have ever been trapped by whites, and is said to be rich in beaver."511

Continuing westward to Camas Prairie, Work turned northward and
reached Little Smoky and Big Smoky Rivers, in the drainage of Boise
River. The men complained that beaver were "very scarce, for a new coun-
try which this may be considered to be." From Indians Work learned
that the only pass in the mountains to the northeast was by the South Fork
of Boise River, which still lay to the westward. Moving to the latter
stream above its junction with the Big Smoky, Work climbed a nearby
peak from which he could see to the northward "a continuation of
rugged mountains covered with snow" -- the Sawtooth Range.512

On May 24, 1832, four men were sent out to scout a way across
the range and to see "what sort of a country is ahead of them." They
returned the next day to report that a passable route had been found,
although there was still considerable snow. "On the opposite side,"
they said, "there is a pretty extensive valley" watered by a "pretty
large stream." They had reached Sawtooth Valley, and what was more
they had each caught two beaver there.513

On Sunday, May 27, the party was on the move a little after day-
light. Traveling through snow the greater part of the day, they
probably ascended Vienna Creek and crossed the summit into Smiley
Creek. An Indian trail is known to have led that way. 514

When the upper Sawtooth Valley was reached, Work was quick to observe that the small willows along the river were "of too small a size to promise beaver." Before the long day was over this judgment was confirmed. Traps were set, but few beaver were taken. Signs were found confirming reports that Americans and Flatheads had hunted there during the summer. "Thus we find the country which we expected to find new and rich is neither, and does not answer the account given of it by the Indians." the leader bitterly commented in his journal. 515

The brigade proceeded down Sawtooth Valley to the vicinity of the present Upper Stanley. Trials on neighboring streams proved that either there were no beaver or that the Americans had made a clean sweep of the valuable animals. Concluding that the Salmon River region had been exhausted as far as beaver were concerned, Work decided to head for home.

On June 4 the entire company packed up and moved westward, probably past Cape Horn and across the very low divide to the Bear Valley drainage. 516 From there they beat a way westward across the Payette and Weiser drainages, suffering much from a scarcity of game and from having to cut trails through dense woods. By June 19 the men had consumed all their provisions, and horses began to be killed for food. Only as the Snake River was neared were they able to trade a few provisions from the natives.

The brigade reached the Snake River "about midway between Payette's and Waser Rivers," on June 27. Work "immediately" put
his men to building a "skin canoe." and the next three days were occupied in crossing the people, baggage, and horses to the west side of the stream. A Company mule and some property were lost in the process.

On June 30 Work detached eight men under C. Plante to hunt on the Malheur River, the upper Silvies River, and on the headwaters of Crooked River. He gave them twenty-four days to reach Walla Walla. The main company went down the Snake a few miles to Burnt River, which was ascended to its upper waters. The party then crossed to the tributaries of John Day River. Here a trapper named Soteaux became lost and despite intensive search by members of the brigade was not found. Later in the year Work heard that the missing man had been murdered by the Snakes. 517

From the upper waters of the John Day, Work crossed the mountains northward and reached Fort Nez Percés on July 19, 1832. The various detached parties straggled in during the next day or two. On his arrival, Work received confirmation of Indian reports that two of the four men he had sent on the foolhardy venture down the Salmon River had been drowned.

A few days were spent at Walla Walla settling accounts with the men, storing their baggage, and gumming boats for the voyage down the Columbia to the depot. On the morning of July 25 Work embarked with thirty men and by dint of hard driving reached Fort Vancouver on the afternoon of July 27, 1832. 518

The results of Work's 1831-1832 expedition verged on the disastrous. McLoughlin described the fur returns as "very poor." 519
Six Europeans had been lost -- four killed by Indians, two drowned -- and one had been "disabled for Life." One Indian with the party also died of wounds inflicted by the Blackfeet. Out of 329 horses brought from Walla Walla or acquired on the way, 114 were lost, killed for food, died of fatigue or cold, or were otherwise missing.

But McLoughlin defended Work's leadership of the expedition. "I am satisfied," he told the Committee, "he did the utmost that could possibly be done." Work himself, McLoughlin added, had suggested going to the Clark Fork region, "the only place where there are Beaver in any quantity on this side of the Mountains." Since the Snake drainage was cleared of beaver, it was considered desirable to give that region a rest. For that reason, the "Big Doctor" implied and in spite of the fact that the party was believed too weak to operate in Blackfoot territory, "I allowed him to go; & when it is considered he was well aware of the danger ... the firmness & zeal with which he prosecuted the attempt, entitle him to my approbation." The Columbia manager appears to have avoided mentioning that Work had hunted east of the Continental Divide.

As for Work, he seems to have been content to have returned alive. "I am happy in being able to inform you that I enjoy good health," he told a friend. "and am yet blessed with the possession of my scalp which is rather more than I had reason to expect."

Although Work's two expeditions had demonstrated quite conclusively that the Snake Country was almost ruined as a trapping ground, McLoughlin was not prepared to abandon it or the Snake expeditions entirely; neither was he ready to replace Work as their
leader. As early as March 14, 1832, he told Chief Trader Francis Heron at Fort Colville to comply with Work's "usual Requisition" as fully as possible and to forward the supplies to Walla Walla. And on July 1 he requested Clerk Pierre Pambrun at Fort Nez Percé to trade as many horses as he could and to assist Work to the fullest extent of his ability. And on July 2, in a letter sent ahead to meet Work at Walla Walla, he said: "If you have found no place to employ your men this ensuing Winter -- I think we will be obliged to send them to the Bonaventura [Sacramento] Valley -- at the same time it is unnecessary to say anything to the men ... though we can come to no decision on the subject till I see you."

After Work and McLoughlin discussed the future route at Fort Vancouver, it was decided to take another try at the Snake Country, but only that part of it bordering the Humboldt River. If no rich hauls of beaver were made there, Work was to move on to the Sacramento River in California. Work himself seems to have had in mind "proceeding round" from the Humboldt "to the S. branch" [the San Joaquin River] and descending it "to the head of the Bay of St. Francisco."

McLoughlin was a bit less definite in the written instructions he handed to Work at Fort Vancouver on August 17, 1832. "You will proceed with the party under your charge, either to the Snake Country or to the Bonaventura Valley as from the information you will acquire on the Route you may deem most advisable ... If you meet Michel Leframboise [in charge of the Company's Southern Brigade] you will assume the Direction of the two parties."
On that same day Work left the depot to join his men who were enjoying their regale a few miles upriver. "I am going to start with my remmuffin freemen to the southward towards the Spanish settlements with what success I cannot say," he wrote to a friend. Soon the gossip among the Columbia officers was that this expedition would mark the "last year of the [Snake] party."

The next morning the brigade of twenty-six men got under way in earnest, proceeding up the Columbia in three boats. Fort Nez Percé was reached on August 24 and 25. The following few days were spent distributing the provisions, leather lodges, horse après [horse "furniture"], and the horses. But when this task was completed the expedition experienced a further delay. A number of the people had been taken ill with malaria at Fort Vancouver, but instead of recovering at Walla Walla as they had a year earlier they seemed to become worse, and an infectious disease which Work called a "severe cold" spread through the party. Several more days were spent waiting for the sick to recover, but the season was becoming late and a start finally had to be made on September 6 even though a number of the people were still nearly incapacitated.

François Payette, a veteran of the Columbia fur trade and a regular Company employee, had been designated as second in command of the expedition by McLoughlin and was to take charge if anything untoward should happen to Work. But Payette was so ill that he had to be left behind at Walla Walla. When word of this misfortune reached the "Big Doctor," he fell into despair. There was now no one in the brigade capable of taking charge should Work be incapacitated,
he said, and should that happen "we may consider the Snake Party lost."\textsuperscript{532}

The exact number of people in the party as it was finally organized is difficult to determine, since Work's statements at different times are not in complete agreement. However, on January 22, 1833, he said the company consisted of 28 men, 22 women, 44 children, and 6 Indians, a total of 100; and this figure was certainly very close to the mark. As late as a few days before his departure from Fort Vancouver Work had not intended to bring his own family with him as he had on his two previous Snake expeditions. "The misery is too great," he wrote in a personal letter.\textsuperscript{533} But when the party rode away from Walla Walla his mixed-blood wife, Josette, and their "three little girls" were among those present.

Proceeding in a generally southern direction by a route which cannot be precisely traced from the rather sparse information provided by Work's journal, the brigade crossed the Umatilla River and then traversed the upper tributaries of John Day River over mountainous terrain to the headwaters of Silvies River. Progress was painfully slow due to the continued illness of the people. On the upper waters of Silvies River the brigade paused a day while the men gathered and trimmed lodge poles, an important step before entering the unforested desert ahead of them. As the party descended Silvies River beaver were caught in modest numbers, but hovering Indians stole an occasional trap and threatened the horses.
Following Silvies River nearly to its mouth in Malheur Lake, Ogden went directly south to the north shore of Harney Lake, which he reached on October 7. He had intended to retrace his old route from Silvies River to the Humboldt and then to search south of it for the river vaguely mentioned to Ogden by the Indians. But he considered the season "too far advanced" and feared that the Humboldt would be frozen over and thus not available for trapping by the time he could reach it. So he gave up all idea of going south and of entering the Central Valley of California at its southern end. He altered his plans and decided to proceed "straight to the Bonaventura," that is to Pit River and the Sacramento.534

A hard march westward across the desert to Wagontire Mountain and then southwest brought the company to Lake Abert. Continuing south along the west side of the lake, Work marched in the same general direction to Goose Lake, which Work called "pit lake." Provisions began to grow short during this leg of the journey, and four men each killed a horse to eat. Work was critical of this waste, accusing the men of having been "very improvident" in not husbanding their supplies.535

Passing down the east shore of Goose Lake, the brigade reached Pit River, which was descended, though not always closely, as far as the present Hat Creek. On November 12 the brigade turned southward up Hat Creek to about the site of today's Hat Creek Ranger Station. Following a route known to two of his men, Work left this stream and crossed the Cascade Range to the southwest between
Burney Mountain and Stony Butte, north of Lassen Peak. Reaching the drainage of Cow Creek, he followed it down to the Sacramento River, where he arrived on November 19, 1832. Game was now quite abundant. "All hands are living well," Work commented with evident relief.

From a campsite about opposite today's Anderson, Work sent his men upstream to fashion canoes from the trunks of large pine trees. This was, in his words, "laborious work." But the bourgeois considered the Sacramento to be too much in flood to be trapped by any other means. At last the craft were finished, and the "canoe party" was started down the Sacramento on November 25. Work and the remaining company set out down the east side of the river the same day.

Some ten miles north of Butte Creek Work was surprised to meet two French-Canadians on their way to Fort Vancouver with messages. These men belonged to the Company's Southern Party under Michel Laframboise, who had been sent into California to hunt along the coast but who had moved to the Sacramento Valley and trapped it from Butte Creek to the San Francisco Bay area. This news was a bitter blow to Work. "After all our long journey here," he lamented, "there are no beaver remaining for our party." He was further discouraged to learn that a company of American trappers under Ewing Young was also operating in the valley. Work sent off messengers to find Laframboise with a note "expressing a wish to see him as soon as possible that I may determine . . . where it will be most eligible to winter." Undoubtedly he intended to say
more than that when he saw Michel face to face!

At Butte Creek the canoes were abandoned. The crews had caught few beaver, and there seemed to be no prospect of taking more in the "big river." Turning east on December 9, 1832, the brigade crossed the valley floor to the Marysville Buttes, a prominent landmark which Work termed simply "the bute." Here the party went into camp, held up by a massive rise in the Sacramento River which turned the "whole lower plain" into a lake. Game was plentiful, however, since the animals, particularly elk, took refuge on the high ground from the flood.

Michel Laframboise arrived from his camp "below" on December 27. It was determined that the leader of the Southern Party should send off some of his men to scout out a good route to drier land west of the Sacramento. Work was to go farther downstream and cross the river as soon as the weather permitted. With this end in mind, the Snake Party moved to the Feather River on December 31 after the waters had receded somewhat. The next day, being New Year's, each man received a dram of rum and some cakes. All down the valley Work was impressed by the density of the Indian population. "The country must be rich in resources when such numbers of people find subsistence," he observed.

Work scouted down Feather River but was prevented by high water from finding a place where he could cross the Sacramento. Frustrated, he made a short excursion eastward into the Sierra foothills, largely in the hope of finding game and beaver. He was disappointed on both counts and retraced his steps to the Marysville Buttes, where elk
were abundant. On the way he was joined by the Southern Party under Michel Laframboise. It consisted of 13 men, 12 women, 16 children, and 17 Indians, a total of 63. Work assumed command of the combined force.

The Buttes were reached on January 22, 1833, and the people were soon busily employed killing elk and drying the meat. Most of them had been low on food for a considerable time. After a few days the game was frightened away by the heavy hunting, and hunger began to pinch once more. But all in all Work was pleased with his stay at the Buttes. "We have been a month here," he wrote on February 22, "and we could not have fallen on a better place to pass a part of the dead winter season when nothing could be done in the way of trapping on account of the height of the waters." He recorded that while there 395 elk, 148 deer, 17 bears, and 8 antelope had been killed, "which is certainly a great many more than was required, but when the most of the people have ammunition and use animals they must needs fire upon them let them be wanted or not." But with game now scarce, it was time to move on.

The combined brigades broke camp on February 23 and went northward up the east side of the Sacramento Valley. Work's object was to find a safe place to cross the "big river" and reach the Coast Range, where he hoped to find better hunting and trapping. From what apparently was the general vicinity of today's Oroville, Laframboise reconnoitered the Sacramento River and could be approached without too much trouble from the receding flood waters. The camp was moved westward to the river on March 3. Five
canoes, made from elk hides forehandy dressed by the women at the Buttes, were quickly built, and the stream was crossed on March 5.

Work now marched to the base of the Coast Range and followed the hills south, evidently as far as upper Suisun Creek. Here, on March 18, he split his party, sending "20 men & 11 Indians with their traps and two horses each" to dog the steps of the Americans under Ewing Young who, Work had learned, had headed across the hills toward the ocean about a month earlier. Alexander Carson, the old Astorian and veteran of many Company expeditions, was placed in charge of this group.

That same day Michel Laframboise and five men were dispatched to Mission San Francisco Solano at Sonoma for a supply of ammunition. Work and the main company remained in camp to await Michel's return. On March 26 Laframboise was back. He had been unable to obtain ammunition at Sonoma so had gone on to the Russian American Company's establishment at either Bodega or Fort Ross, where he succeeded in buying only ten pounds of powder, thirty pounds of lead, and ten pounds of tobacco. The Russian "governor" told him that the route northward along the coast was "bad but passable" and said there were no signs of beaver in that direction. Work was suspicious of this last statement. "It may be policy in him to not tell whether there were beaver or not," he commented.

On March 26 Michel and three men were dispatched to find the party which had been sent out on Young's trail and to fix a point for an eventual rendezvous with the main brigade. The next day
Work started southward with the remaining company for San Francisco Bay to "see if there are any beaver to be had along the North side of it which is not known to have been trapped or even visited by any parties of hunters yet."542

He had scarcely begun to hunt on the bayshore when, on March 31, Laframboise came into camp with all the men who had been sent after Ewing Young. He had met them returning eastward. Work was shocked. "I am much dissatisfied with these men's conduct particularly in turning back before they had come up with the Americans," he wrote in his journal. He placed much of the blame on Carson: "Indeed the old man who was at their head and who appeared the fittest person among them, is too easy, tho' sufficiently experienced for the task and listens too much to the babbling among the people."543

The weather, as it had been much of the time since Work's arrival in California, was generally miserable during the stay on the north shore of the bay, and beaver trapping was largely unproductive. On April 1 two Mexican officials from Sonoma visited the camp, and from them Work learned that an American ship was in the harbor at San Francisco. He sent Michel off the next day to see if ammunition could be obtained from that source. Laframboise was back on April 6 with favorable news. Although the vessel had left by the time he reached the south side of the Golden Gate in a rented boat, he was able to obtain 24 pounds of powder and 40 pounds of ball, together with a bottle of rum, from the commandant of the Presidio. That officer, unasked, also threw in a passport for the
brigade to travel and trap in the province. Work grumbled about the "very high price" in beaver pelts which Michel had to pay for the ammunition, but in view of the fact that the expedition was not harassed by the local authorities as Jedediah Smith and other trappers had been, he undoubtedly had received a bargain.

Because April 7, 1833, was Easter Sunday, Work refrained from moving camp. Several of the people rode over to Sonoma to attend Mass at the mission. For some of them this was the first opportunity in many years to avail themselves of the services of a priest.

The next day one of the hunters, Michelle Oteotanin, was severely mauled by a grizzly bear. And at about the same time malaria, together with a "very severe cold" — probably influenza — began to break out among the people, and by April 10 several of them were "very ill." Despite these difficulties, camp was moved to the vicinity of Sonoma, where horses, corn, peas, and even liquor were purchased from the mission.

Resuming the march, the brigade traveled westward, but progress was slow because layovers were made to give the sick, who were daily becoming more numerous and now included Work himself, a little "repose." On April 17 the man wounded by the bear died and was buried. He left a wife and two children. The next day the party reached the shore of the Pacific Ocean and crossed the Russian River near its mouth. There they were met by Peter Kostromitinoff, manager of the Russian establishments in California. He attempted to persuade Work not to pass Fort Ross but capitulated when the British trader
pointed out that there was no other route up the coast and promised to keep his people as far as possible from the post. The Russian then invited Work to the fort, where he spent the night and enjoyed dinner the next day. Since Kostromitinoff spoke "a few words of French," the two men were able to communicate, but conversation was rather sparse.

The brigade continued northward along the coast, struggling across numerous gullies and occasional steep slopes that dropped abruptly to the sea. Several horses were lost due to falls or to drowning when crossing streams. The weather nearly the entire time was raw and cold, with abundant rain at intervals. To cap all, no beaver were found -- exactly as the Russians had said. On April 29, somewhere near the mouth of the Albion River, the party crossed Ewing Young's trail from the interior to the coast.

North of today's Rockport in Mendocino County, the route along the shore became extremely difficult because of steep slopes descending to the breakers, so Work turned inland. Crossing the upper waters of the Mattole River, the company went eastward over "rugged" terrain nearly to the Eel River. Here Work once more divided his party. Laframboise, with 17 European and 13 Indian men, was sent to hunt northward along the coast. For some time a group of the trappers, discontented at the extremely poor yields of their traps, had been asking permission to return home. Work "embraced" the opportunity to detach these people, the more so because it would be easier for the remaining persons to feed themselves with the limited yield of the chase.
The two groups parted company on May 13 or 14, and Work with 17 European and 6 Indian men and their families went eastward to the Eel River. Ascending that stream for a short distance, he crossed to the headwaters of the Russian River. A party of men was detached to hunt for beaver farther down this stream, while Work determined to head for the Sacramento Valley by the shortest route available. Reaching Clear Lake, he followed down its western shore. On May 21 the men who had been sent down the Russian River rejoined the camp. They had found no beaver, and near the northern end of Clear Lake they nearly had been surrounded by "an immense number" of armed and hostile Pomo Indians and considered themselves fortunate to have escaped. Continuing southeastward by a rather circuitous course the brigade reached the Sacramento Valley floor, evidently by following Putah Creek for a considerable distance. From here the route was northerly to the Sacramento River about ten miles north of its junction with Feather River.

"Deeming this a good situation to make canoes," Work wrote in his journal, "sent the people to seek wood, which they have found, and some of them have felled their trees." It took several days to complete the craft, during which time, Work noted, the "Muscatoes are like to devour us." On June 6 the party went downstream to the mouth of Feather River and crossed to the east bank. The canoeemen were dispatched to hunt beaver along the Sacramento and its tributaries as far as San Francisco Bay, while Work moved southward by land.
Plagued by extremely hot weather, mosquitoes, and sand flies, and by difficult crossings of streams and sloughs, the people were miserable. "Scarcely an individual has been able to sleep these last 3 nights," Work wrote on June 22. 

And as the party progressed south the Indians became increasingly troublesome. A number of horses were stolen, and pursuit of the accomplished thieves proved fruitless.

A noteworthy incident of the march occurred on June 27. The native wives of two of the men deserted, and search parties were unable to overtake them. It was believed they were headed for Sonoma Mission, where one of the women had found friends during an earlier flight. Later their husbands discovered them at one of the mission farms and brought them back to camp, chastened by the rough handling they had received from natives while fleeing.

On June 28 the party reached the vicinity of the present Stockton and French Camp. Work's purpose in stopping on the channels and sloughs in this region was to be as close to the "bay" as possible in order to provide support for the canoemen hunting there. For the next month he maintained a base camp in the area, moving it occasionally to improve hunting for game. He was aware that Alexander Roderick McLeod had camped in the neighborhood in 1829.

During this period harassment by thieving Indians increased. "We will be obliged to destroy a village or two of these scoundrels," Work commented on July 1, but he took no hostile action except to pursue thieves when they were observed. On July 10 one of the robbers was killed during such a chase. Three days later a group of Indians came
into camp and made friendly overtures, but when the natives were discovered running off horses while attention was thus diverted, a short but sharp skirmish broke out. One of the thieves was about to shoot an arrow into Work's back when a woman of the brigade drove the assailant off with an axe. Two Indians were killed, but the rest escaped into the tules. Before dawn the next morning a large party of natives attacked the camp with a shower of arrows, but when they found the trappers prepared to receive them they drifted away into the surrounding foliage.

During the various moves of his camp Work went nearly as far south as the Stanislaus River, but he found very little relief from the heat, insects, and "shyness" of the elk, antelope, and deer. Finally, on July 24, all the boats had returned to the "canoe rendezvous" at the present Stockton. The total returns of the canoemen since June 11 amounted to only 249 beaver and 85 otter. Work was disappointed. "The canoes have [had] so little success," he wrote, "that we have determined to give up the hunt and return to the fort." It is possible that Work intended this expedition to be his last, at least to the Snake Country, for he added in explaining his reasons for deciding it was time to leave: "besides if the people be sent off again in the fall they will have little enough time to gain a wintering [?] ground before winter sets in." The word "we" is conspicuous by its absence.

The homeward march was started on July 25, and one event of that day was an attack on an Indian village near the Calaveras River.
Work believed he had evidence that the inhabitants had staged the assault on his camp on July 13 and 14. The Indians fled after the first fire, so not "much execution" was inflicted, though Work thought "some" had been killed. One of his men was slightly wounded by an arrow.

The next day, farther north, another village was approached with the intention of recovering stolen horses. No attack was planned. But the trappers were met with a shower of arrows as they drew near, so they chased the Indians into a swamp, burned the huts, and took twenty-one horses, among which were four that had been stolen from the brigade. Again Work estimated that "some" natives had been killed.

Continuing up the east side of the Sacramento River on their outward track, the company suffered much from heat, and malaria and an influenza-like disease broke out once more among the people. But as the party advanced northward they were not troubled by hostile Indians. The great pandemic of 1833 had almost depopulated the native villages. By the time the brigade arrived at Battle Creek sixty-one of the people were sick, but Work noticed that the Indians in the northern end of the valley were not as seriously affected by disease as those below. He had long since exhausted his small supply of medicines, and his people had no recourse but to suffer along as best they could. "I endeavour to keep up their spirits as well as I can," Work commented, "but it is become now of little effect."
When Cow Creek was reached, the brigade turned up it and followed their earlier track across the Cascade Range to Hat Creek. There was no trapping now. Work's only thought was to get his people to Fort Vancouver and a doctor's care as quickly as possible and before so many men were incapacitated that the brigade could not move. During the crossing to the Pit River drainage an Indian with the party died, and Work himself fell victim to the fever. The local Indians on Hat Creek, however, were healthy and spoiling for trouble. "Where we are now the natives bear a bad character," Work recorded on August 29. The accuracy of this observation was proved that same night when arrows were shot into five horses, killing one.

"This is the reward we meet for treating these barbarians kindly and endeavouring to conciliate them," wrote Work. "Nothing but severe punishment is of any avail with such savages."55

On Hat Creek Work left his fall trail southward. Going to the mouth of that stream, he crossed Pit River and traveled north until he struck Fall River. After ascending that stream northwesterly he traversed Dead Horse Pass to the upper waters of McCloud River. The march was continued in the same general direction north of Mount Shasta to Shasta Valley and then north across the Klamath River and the Siskiyou Range to the Rogue River. Most of this part of the journey was over routes pioneered by members of the Umpqua and Southern parties. On the Klamath River Work came upon evidence that Laframboise had passed that way earlier on his return to Fort Vancouver. The unruly subordinate had not long followed instructions to trap northward along the coast.
On a small tributary of the Rogue River one of the men, C. Groslui, died of malaria on September 17. He left a widow and six children "to lament his loss & all ill with the fever." For some days most of the people had been very sick. "I tremble regularly every night myself," Work recorded on September 11, "and am becoming weaker daily." So many people were ill that a proper watch could not be kept over the horses, and a number of the animals simply wandered off. "Our whole party is now become exceedingly helpless," the leader remarked at one point.

On the main Rogue River the Indians lived up to their name and killed and wounded a number of horses. Work could only fume, since his party was in no condition to retaliate. Before leaving this stream another man, P. Bernie, died. For several days he had been so weak he had to be tied on his horse. He was mourned by a wife and five children, "all ill with the fever." There was good reason for Work to write: "The people are getting more discouraged every day."

From the Rogue the brigade followed a by then well-known route northward by way of the Umpqua River and the Willamette Valley. Along the way, on October 13, they met Michel Laframboise with "four men and some Indians" bound for the Umpqua region. Michel had reached Fort Vancouver during July. From him Work obtained 3 gallons of coarse flour, 3 gallons of Indian corn, 1 pound of tea, and a half loaf of sugar, all of which, he said, were "of the utmost importance to me as I have had nothing of the kind for some time back. I had an ample supply of all these things on leaving Ft."
Vancouver, but our voyage has been long and so many people sick almost the whole time there were frequent demands upon me and a little to one and a little to another soon goes through a good deal. Work sent a letter to McLoughlin by one of Laframboise's Indians, and on October 18 the messenger was back with a reply and more supplies, including "Some bread & butter" -- a luxury indeed on a trapping expedition.

"Sandencampment," better known today as Champoeg, was reached on October 24. Here Work borrowed a canoe from the leading settler, Jean Baptiste Desportes dit McKay, and used it to help his people across the Tualatin River. When the party arrived at the Willamette Falls where Oregon City was later to rise, Work sent off "all the healthy men" with the horses, which were to be placed "on the island at the entrance of the Willamut," undoubtedly the present Sauvie Island. The men were then to bring the boats which McLoughlin would have waiting back up to the falls for the people and the baggage.

Work hired a canoe from the Indians and proceeded ahead to the depot, where he arrived on October 29, 1833, and received a "hearty welcome." All of the remainder of the brigade came in by boat within two days. Most of the sick had so far recovered during the last part of the journey that only a few of them had to "go under the Doctors care," but Work believed all "were so much exhausted and continue still so debilitated that it will be some time before they are fit for any duty."
It had been "certainly no easy task to get the despairing dispirited people" to keep moving and to get them back to the depot, Work later reported. Two men had deserted in California (one of whom was later brought to Vancouver in a Company vessel) and two men, an Indian, and two children had died from disease. The man killed by a bear near Sonoma had belonged to Laframboise's party. 557

"I was reduced to a perfect skeleton and so much exhausted and debilitated that I could scarcely walk," Work added. 558

The financial results of the expedition were more than disappointing; they produced a loss. 559 Work brought back only 1023 beaver and otter pelts. These were meager returns indeed for an expedition which had been in the field for more than a year.

"Indeed," Work reported to Governor Simpson and the Council, "the country is now so exhausted that little can be done with it." 560

Work was not alone in this opinion. In 1832 Simpson believed the Snake Country to be so overrun with Americans and the beaver so depleted that the Company should withdraw from it. Even in London the Committee came to the same conclusion after noting the declining returns. On December 4, 1833, the directors wrote to McLoughlin:

"The operations of the Snake Expedition have been very unprofitable for several years past, and attended with a serious loss of life; we therefore desire that if not abandoned this year it may be broke up next Summer." 561

Work's journey of 1832-1833 marked the last Snake expedition of the old type. Never again would the "ragmuffin" veterans of the
Snake Party -- disgruntled, undisciplined, sometimes disloyal, but too fascinated by their wild life to give it up -- march out from Fort Nez Percés in their long caravans for the deserts and ranges that lay beyond the Blue Mountains. There was no major Snake expedition of the old type in 1834, but evidently not because of orders received from Simpson or the committee. Although McLoughlin was well aware of the exhausted state of the region, he seems to have intended to send the men back as quickly as possible. On March 1, 1834, the "Big Doctor" told a friend that there was no party in the Snake Country that year because Work had returned so late in the fall that it was impossible for him to "go back this season." In other words, as Work had feared, the wintering grounds could not be reached in time to make the usual spring hunt.

Work himself spent the winter enjoying the hospitality of Fort Vancouver and recovering his health. In May, 1834, McLoughlin sent him with a party for a six-week "trading and hunting" trip to the Umpqua region, and toward the end of the year he left by ship for the Northwest Coast. He never again had to fight the Blackfeet and chase the troublesome Indians of California. By early 1834 a number -- perhaps most -- of Work's Snake Country trappers were transferred to the Flathead expedition headed by Clerk Francis Ermatinger.

But McLoughlin by no means had given up on the Snake Country. Despite the poor results of the last Snake expedition he told a friend in 1834, "of course we will send" parties there even though
"we cannot expect to make much by it." There were still furs to be found in the region, and American opposition, though now weakened, was still present. His objectives remained the same, but his method changed. For some time American traders had been appearing at Flathead Post, near Thompson Falls, in the present Montana, anxious to exchange their furs for supplies. Sometimes it was the need for food which drove them to this expedient, but they soon came to realize that they could obtain their outfits, even trading goods, more easily and at less cost at Company posts than by going to the American rendezvous or to another American base. The Company had already taken steps to meet American competition in the region by authorizing its agent at Flathead Post to buy furs at the American tariff. In 1832 it took another large step in this direction.

On July 1, 1833, McLoughlin suggested to Chief Trader Simon McGillivray that either he or Francis Ermatinger might accompany the Flathead Indians to the "planes" that summer and perhaps travel with them again during the winter. In this way the Flathead furs could be gathered before the Americans could get them, and Flathead Post, which could not support a permanent staff, could be manned on an intermittent basis.

As it turned out, this duty fell to Ermatinger. He went out during the late summer with the Flatheads, who almost certainly took their usual route to the upper waters of the Missouri River. It is most likely, then, that he intruded into United States
territory. In any case, he met a number of American traders and seems to have conceived the idea that a profitable business could be done by taking goods to them in the field. The "about 400" skins he collected probably were the lesser part of the gain from this expedition. 568

During the winter of 1832-1833 Ermatinger presented his idea to McLoughlin, who at about the same time was contemplating his discussions with the Boston trader, Nathaniel Wyeth, who planned to supply American trappers in the Rocky Mountains with goods brought by ship to the Columbia. 569 The "Big Doctor" was sufficiently astute to see the merits of this idea, and he must have wondered if the Company could not do the same thing. Thus McLoughlin was prepared to see the value of Ermatinger's proposal and gave it his blessing. 570

Ermatinger, in company with Wyeth who was returning to Boston to make new arrangements for his trading company, left Fort Vancouver about the end of January, 1833, to go out again with the Flatheads with the objective, as he said, of "looking after American trappers." His main purpose was to trade furs wherever he could, from Americans or from Indians, but his men were to trap whenever an opportunity presented itself. A second expedition, led by François Payette but under Ermatinger's general command, went out from Walla Walla with the Nez Percés for the same purposes. 571

Thus was established a new pattern of exploitation of the Snake Country. Thereafter two small parties went out annually, one from Flathead Post and one from Walla Walla, the latter being more specifically directed toward the Snake River area. The routine was further
changed in 1834 when Thomas McKay established a post on the Boise River for the Company and when the firm acquired Wyeth's Fort Hall in 1837. Pack trains carried supplies to these posts annually, and trapping and trading parties worked out from these bases until the Company withdrew entirely from the Snake Country in 1855 and 1856.

Occasionally these parties were made up largely of trappers and originated at Walla Walla. At times these groups, generally starting from Fort Hall, extended their operations to the Utah area and even into Arizona. The terms "Snake Party" and "Snake expedition" continued to be used in Company correspondence and accounts. But the regular annual, far-ranging, trapping oriented Snake Brigade was dead. The activities of the new Snake parties, while of much interest, are beyond the scope of this study.572

The old Snake Party was remarkably successful in meeting its main objective -- the reduction of the Snake Country to a fur desert. The story is told by the declining returns. From the "nearly 5000" beaver pelts brought in by Ross in 1824, the numbers grew smaller almost every year until an apparent equilibrium was reached: 3577 in 1826; 4000 in 1829; 1295 in 1830; 737 (large beaver only) in 1831; and 788 large beaver in 1832. After the end of the regular Snake brigades the returns for the Snake Country were even more revealing: 350 large beaver in 1834; 220 large beaver in 1835; and 800 large beaver in 1836.573 For 1844 the returns were 722 large beaver and 272 small; for 1845 they amounted to 978 large beaver and 588 small; and for 1846 they were 897 large beaver and 544 small.574
After the early 1830s the Snake Country trade became less profitable for the Americans also, and their numbers began to decline. As Governor Simpson had hoped, the rivals had been, if not eliminated, at least discouraged. And these results had been achieved with financial benefit to the Company. In 1846 McLoughlin estimated that the total profits from the Snake Country between 1824 and 1846 were $30,000.575

The Southern Party

While the Snake brigades were scouring the interior for beaver, a parallel series of expeditions was at work on the waters falling into the Pacific south of the Columbia River. Both Astorians and Nor'Westers had sent trappers up the Willamette, and some of these pioneering efforts reached the Umpqua River. In fact, sometime between 1819 and 1821 Thomas McKay, then a North West Company employee, had established a short-lived post on the latter stream.576

There is no record of how far these early expeditions penetrated toward the south. Tantalizing hints in the records have led to speculation that some members of these parties may have reached the extreme northern limits of California, but no hard evidence has yet been found. The fact that the earliest Hudson's Bay Company officers at Fort George had little knowledge of the country beyond the Umpqua except for vague reports given by Indians would seem to indicate that such far-reaching explorations were unlikely.
Little is known about possible Hudson's Bay Company activities along the coast south of Fort George for several years after the concern assumed control of the Columbia region in 1821. If there were any organized trapping parties in that direction they have left no noticeable mark in the documents thus far studied for the present paper. It is certain, however, that activity was revitalized during Governor Simpson's first visit to the Columbia during the winter of 1824-1825.

At Fort George late in 1824 Simpson decided that there were too many superfluous employees at that post, and he determined to keep them occupied pending a decision as to future need for them. "The Supernumeraries or extra men in question," he wrote in his journal, "will be equipped for a whole year and sent off from Fort George on a Trapping Expedition in the month of May accompanied by all the Freemen in this neighborhood so as to form a party of between Fifty & Sixty under the command of Messrs Finnan McDonald & Thos McKay their route will be up the Wilhamot River across a Mountainous Country which we know little about to the Umpqua River and from thence Hunt their way to the Banks of the Rio Colorado [probably the Green River] keeping either inland or towards the Coast as the state of the Country in regard to Fur bearing Animals and the means of living may direct; they will . . . return to Fort George in the month of June following year (1826)." 577

On February 23, 1826, the London directors gave their blessing to the decision to send parties "Southward of the Umpqua, as it is desirable to obtain from that Territory as large a present supply of
Beaver as possible and to allow our other Country to recruit."

American trappers had not yet reached the approaches to southern Oregon and California, and evidently the need to thwart such rivals was not as much of a motive for action there as it was in the Snake Country.

Simpson soon decided to give the command of this southern party to John Work and Thomas McKay (and perhaps even to McKay alone), and the latter clerk accompanied the governor up the Columbia as far as Walla Walla to obtain horses for the expedition. But during the boat trip McKay seems to have made some errors in judgment, because by the time Simpson left McKay at Fort Nez Perces and advanced to the mouth of the Spokane River he had altered his decision. "Some doubts having arisen in my mind as to the abilities of Messrs Work and McKay for the conduct of the Umpqua Expedition and as I expect very important benefits to result therefrom if properly managed I have been induced to offer the command to Mr Finnan McDonald," he commented in his journal. Two days later, on April 10, 1825, Simpson wrote to McLoughlin that "McKay, "altho' over ambitious of being a Leader," was "not fit to command."

The expedition did not set off in May as Simpson had hoped. McLoughlin detained some of the men to salt salmon, leaving the remainder of the party too weak to leave while two rival native chiefs along the Columbia were quarreling. Not until August 20 did Clerk Finan McDonald, accompanied by Thomas McKay, lead his little band out from Fort Vancouver. In addition to the "gentlemen," the
party consisted of 22 servants, 2 freemen, and 4 or 5 Indians; no women were allowed to go along. Meanwhile, McLoughlin had heard reports of a river "rich in Beaver" three days' march south of the Umpqua and of a large lake "SSW of Walla Walla," probably Klamath Lake. He urged McDonald to visit these places if practicable.582

McDonald did not carry out Simpson's grand design. He ascended the Willamette Valley for some distance and then turned eastward across the Cascades, probably by Santiam Pass. It was thought at the time that the Umpqua River extended far inland, and McDonald evidently was attempting to follow his instructions to reach it by striking its upper waters. Instead he reached the Deschutes River, which he ascended southward to its headwaters and then continued, east of Crater Lake, to the Williamson River and Klamath Marsh. Here he turned back, defeated by a shortage of food and by native reports of fierce tribes ahead. Descending the Deschutes, he met Ogden's 1825-1826 Snake brigade near the mouth of Crooked River and joined that expedition as has already been described.583

McDonald's chief contribution seems to have been acquiring quite positive information of the existence and general locations of Klamath Lake and the Klamath River. The route he opened across the Cascades was later examined by Ogden but was not found suitable as a path for outfitting the Snake expeditions, although it seemingly was employed later by small parties bringing horses for Company use over the range.584 Peter Skene Ogden, however, had no hesitation in branding McDonald's 1825 expedition a "failure."585
Meanwhile, Governor Simpson, at York Factory on July 11, 1825, had directed that McDonald should be relieved of the command of the "Umpqua Expedition" and replaced by Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod, a fur trade veteran who reached the Columbia in the fall of that year. Simpson, not yet knowing of the manpower shortage caused by the desertion of Ogden's men to the Americans, ordered McLeod to conduct his expedition under "similar instructions" to those given to McDonald. 586 McLoughlin seems to have considered it possible for McLeod to reach the Umpqua with a small party, but nothing was said about going eastward to the Klamath again. The main objective was to be "to collect as many furs as you can."587

On May 5, 1826, the main part of McLeod's first Umpqua expedition left Fort Vancouver by boat for Willamette Falls. McLeod remained behind to receive a band of horses being sent down from Fort Nez Percés. He caught up with his men at the falls, but considered it necessary to rest a few days to allow the "fatigued" animals to recover their strength. Finally, on May 21, the march southward began -- slowly. The brigade was small, consisting in addition to McLeod of only thirteen men, including three local Indians.588 Among them was the interpreter, Michel Laframboise, who during the previous winter had made a trip to the coast "to the Southward of the Umpqua River" and reported finding "many vestiges" of beaver in two small streams in that direction.589 "To that quarter we shall direct our Course," McLeod wrote bravely in his journal. 590
Near the site of the present Newberg the party left the Willamette River and traveled west over the coastal mountains and reached the ocean, evidently at the mouth of the Big Nestucca River. McLeod now turned south along the immediate shoreline. Travel was hard going due to the many streams that had to be crossed, to say nothing of the brush, rain, and other impediments to be overcome. As the journey progressed, very few of the beaver promised by Laframboise were seen or taken, a fact which, wrote McLeod, "evidently proves his erroneous judgment." On the rare occasions when beaver were found in modest abundance, faulty traps caused most of them to be "missed," giving rise to a "very prevalent complaint" that "echoes from every mouth." All in all, McLeod found the returns "poor prospects for a new Country that was seldom if ever hunted."

At one point some of the men coasted the shore in native canoes, but southward travel was halted when the Siuslaw River was reached, still some distance north of the Umpqua. The Siuslaw was ascended for some distance and a camp established as a hunting base. Trapping was only moderately rewarding, but the local Indians said there were many beaver farther on and promised to hunt for pelts to trade to McLeod on his next visit to the area.

Having orders from McLoughlin to be at Fort Vancouver by "the latter end of August," McLeod started homeward on July 31. Retracing his outward path as far as the Willamette Valley, he turned north after crossing the Yamhill River and made more directly for the Columbia River. On August 17 the men reached the western
channel of the Willamette opposite Sauvie Island. The next day, August 18, 1826, McLeod was back at the depot reporting to Chief Factor McLoughlin. The Columbia manager was not pleased.

McLeod, he told the London directors and Governor Simpson, had collected only 395 pounds of furs -- 285 beaver, 36 land otter, and 3 sea otter -- a meager haul, and one-third of those obtained by trade with the natives.

McLeod seems to have given McLoughlin the impression that he had actually reached the Umpqua River, although his journal shows clearly enough that he did not. And the "Big Doctor" was interested to hear that the Indians had confirmed the existence of the rumored large river "which abounded in Beaver" only two days' march south of the Umpqua. He determined to send McLeod back at once to investigate. "I consider it of the utmost importance to us that if possible you should have a personal communication with the Natives of the large River South of the Umpqua so as to open a trade with them at the same time keeping in view to endeavour to find a place to employ your men during the winter in hunting Beaver," he told McLeod on September 20, 1826.

McLeod's second Umpqua or Southern expedition left Fort Vancouver on September 15, 1826. Michel Laframboise was along again as interpreter, and the remainder of the party numbered "fourteen Men and four Indians." Some of the men crossed the Columbia by boat, and the rest helped to swim the horses across the river the next day. Going southward to the vicinity of Champoeg, McLeod set up a camp for the final organization and supply of the brigade.
Here he received McLoughlin's final instructions. As finally composed, the party consisted of McLeod, a clerk, Laframboise as interpreter, "eleven Canadian Servants, five Owhyhees [Hawaiians] & two Native Indians." Also along for part of the journey was David Douglas, the Scot botanist sent out by the Horticultural Society of London to collect plants.\textsuperscript{597}

Getting under way at last on September 27 -- McLeod, as usual, having abundant excuses for the delay -- the party went south, roughly along the west bank of the Willamette. Progress was slow, game scarce, and forage slight, because the Indians had burned off much of the grass in the valley. Several freemen met on the way were permitted to join the company. Somewhere in the general latitude of the present Eugene the brigade took a more westerly course and crossed the coastal ranges to Elk Creek, which was descended to the Umpqua. Near the site of today's Scottsburg McLeod set up a base camp and divided his party.

Leaving part of his brigade to hunt in the Umpqua area, McLeod descended the river in native canoes to near its mouth. Along the way men were detached to hunt the various tributaries. The leader had only five trappers and two Indians when in his single remaining craft he landed within sight of the sea. Packing their supplies on their backs, the men started south on foot along the shore, bound for the fabled "big river" south of the Umpqua.

At Coos Bay McLeod could see that the coast ahead was blocked by mountains and dense woods, so he rented a canoe and crew from the
Indians for a dangerous voyage around Coos Head. Once more on foot, he continued south along the beach to the Coquille River. A few days at the end of October, 1826, were spent exploring up this stream by canoe and trading beaver from the natives. The results were encouraging so, planning to return, he retraced his steps to the base camp on the Umpqua. There he discovered that his trappers had been having a difficult time, beset by bad weather and Indian hostility. One man had been killed and the Indian wife of another kidnapped.

Leaving a few men to trap on the upper Umpqua and sending David Douglas and the relatively few furs thus far gathered to Fort Vancouver, McLeod started back for the Coquille River. Traveling partly by canoe and partly on foot, the Coos River was reached and trapped but yielded only fifty beaver in two weeks. McLeod pushed on to the Coquille, but here the water was so high that beaver could not be hunted. While waiting for the river to fall, he decided to find a way to the "Big River" ahead. An attempt by an inland route failed due to rushing torrents on the upper waters of the Coquille's South Fork. He next pushed up the Middle Fork of the same river and crossed eastward to Lookingglass Creek and the Umpqua near the present Roseburg. After visiting some of his men near the mouth of Elk Creek, he returned to his base camp on the Coquille.

Starting south once more along the coast on foot and by canoe he reached the Great River about four miles above its mouth. The local natives called the stream the Toototenez. "It falls short of
the description report has given it, in size and depth," wrote the disappointed McLeod in his journal on January 11, 1827. Because of this "discovery" the Rogue River of today was known briefly as McLeod's River or Tootonez River.

His mission now accomplished, McLeod returned to his camp on Coquille River, only to find that the men left there had been no more successful at taking beaver than had his own party and that the local Indians demanded a higher price for their furs than McLeod was authorized to pay. Since the assigned time for his return to Fort Vancouver was drawing near, he pulled up stakes on January 23 and headed for home. Going eastward by an Indian trail along the northeast branch of the Coquille, he crossed the mountains to Lookingglass Creek. Following down the latter stream McLeod met Laframboise and learned that the interpreter and Jean Baptiste Desportes (Debaty) dit McKay had explored south of the upper Umpqua nearly to the Rogue. Undoubtedly it was their tracks that were observed later by Ogden's men on Jump-off Joe Creek.

McLeod then moved on to the Umpqua, which he reached in the general vicinity of today's Roseburg. Continuing down the Umpqua he learned that a small party he had sent from the Coquille by the coast route had become involved in a tragic incident on Coos River. The accidental discharge of a gun had killed a local native, and one of McLeod's men, Ignace, had been murdered in retaliation.

From his Umpqua base camp McLeod turned eastward to the Willamette Valley. Near the mouth of the Long Tom River the party crossed to
the east bank of the Willamette. That stream was followed, partly
by canoe, to the vicinity of Champoeg, where McLeod and his men
once more took to canoes and reached Fort Vancouver on March 14,
1827. They had been seven months on the trail, most of the time
drenched by the rains of an Oregon winter.598

McLoughlin was again disappointed by the results. McLeod's
first two Umpqua expeditions together, he told Governor Simpson,
produced only 797 "made Beaver" (a "made beaver" was a large, dried
beaver pelt in prime condition or its equivalent value in other
furs) of which 663 were actually beaver and the rest made up of
otter, bear, deer, and other skins. The "Big Doctor" seems to have
been unwilling to accept the fact that beaver were relatively scarce
along the Oregon coast. He believed that if McLeod had started
earlier and if his trappers had been "common able active Men" the
expedition could have taken 1200 made beaver.599 And because Laframboise
and Depaty had not quite reached the inland course of Rogue River,
McLeod's expedition did very little to clarify the confused notions
prevailing among Company officers concerning the geography of
southern Oregon.

During June, 1827, McLeod was sent north on a sea voyage, first
to assist at the construction of Fort Langley on Fraser River and
then to open a maritime trade on the Northwest Coast. He did not
return to Fort Vancouver until October 28 of the same year.600
Meanwhile, Governor Simpson, on July 9, 1827, had repeated his
instructions that the country south and east of the Columbia must
be "closely hunted, as the first step that the American Government will take towards colonization is through their Indian traders and if the country becomes exhausted in fur bearing animals, they can have no inducement to proceed thither." 601

Whether because of these instructions or not, McLoughlin dispatched McLeod to the Umpqua for the third time only eleven days after the chief trader's homecoming from the north. He and his twenty-one men left on November 17, 1827, but McLeod's usual ill fortune dogged his footsteps. The brigade encountered miserable weather, including a severe snowstorm, and passed a cold winter on the Umpqua. The weary hunters limped into Fort Vancouver on March 10, 1828, with only negligible returns. 602

During the early summer of 1828 McLeod headed an expedition to punish the Clallam Indians of Hood Canal, who had murdered a small party of Company employees. Some of the "gentlemen" under his command felt that McLeod had been too hesitant in his operations, but the Governor and Committee believed the retribution exacted had been unnecessarily severe. The unlucky McLeod had been scheduled for promotion to the much-desired rank of chief factor, but the directors denied him this plum. 603

McLoughlin still had faith in McLeod, however. On August 7, 1828, he was on the point of sending the chief trader "with the Willamette Freemen, on a Trapping Expedition South of the Willamette." McLeod was told to return during the next year when it suited his convenience. 604 Years later McLoughlin said the reason for organizing
this expedition was the hope of keeping the freemen busily employed and thus remove them "from a place where they were Anxious to begin to farm." 605

But the very next day Arthur Black reached the depot with news of the massacre of Jedediah Smith's party on the Umpqua River. Smith and two other survivors arrived on August 10. As a result, McLeod's mission was considerably altered. McLoughlin's first reaction to word of the disaster was that the murderers must be punished, otherwise not even the Company's parties would be safe in that region. He also intended to exert "every means in our power" to assist Smith in recovering his property. 606 On August 23 the "Big Doctor" sent Thomas McKay, Michel Laframboise, and a small party to the Willamette Valley to collect horses for a punitive expedition and then, evidently, to visit the Umpqua and gather all possible information about the massacre and to recover as much of Smith's property as possible. 607

McLeod's party was assigned the task of visiting the massacre site in force and taking such action against the murderers as seemed indicated and to retrieve such of Smith's horses, furs, and other articles as McKay failed to obtain. But McLoughlin had learned from Smith that there were beaver on the "Bonaventura River" of California [the Sacramento River], and what is more, the American partisan had given the chief factor a map of his route from San Francisco north to Fort Vancouver. 608 The "Big Doctor" decided that after McLeod had finished his assigned tasks on the Umpqua he should continue south to California to test this promising new field. He was to proceed "as far if possible as the Waters of the Bona ventura
& return in 1829 when it suits your convenience . . . at all events it would be desirable you got acquainted with the passes in the Mountains (if possible) leading to the Bonaventura." 609

Seemingly it took some days to get together the supplies required for this expanded journey, but on September 6, 1828, McLeod left the depot with one boat and a canoe for Champoeg, where the larger part of his brigade was waiting for him. His instructions were "to proceed and hunt in the direction of the Bonaventura & if possible to reach it, on his way he was to endeavour to cause the Indians to restore Mr. Smith's property." 610

Even for McLeod, it took an unusually long time to get the expedition organized at Champoeg, to sober the men up from their regale, and to collect the horses. McLoughlin was impatient. "As to your progress from this place to the Umpqua it was slower than any other Expedition I have Known since I am here," he later scolded. 611 The exact size of the party is difficult to determine due to conflicting statistics and to changing personnel. Governor Simpson said the brigade at the outset consisted "of 28 Servants and Indians" plus Smith and his three surviving companions. 612 In addition several freemen were picked up in the Willamette Valley. The size of the brigade -- larger than the Snake Party for that year and larger than previous Umpqua expeditions -- reflected the importance and anticipated difficulty of the mission. McLeod termed his party the "Southern Expedition," a name that was to endure with slight changes from time to time for many years. 613
Reaching the Umpqua, McLeod found Smith's animals and property scattered over a wide territory, and he set his people to recovering them. After visiting the massacre site and burying all the remains of the victims that could be found, McLeod went to the mouth of the river and made short forays north and south along the coast to collect plundered articles. On the basis of accounts given by the Indians, McLeod decided that there may have been some justification for the attack on the American camp, and he concluded that requiring the natives to return their loot was sufficient to demonstrate that whites could not be killed with impunity.

Winter on the Umpqua was miserable as usual, and Smith, thoroughly fed up with McLeod's delays and lack of decisive action, left for Fort Vancouver on November 28. Three days later McLeod himself started for the depot, as he said, for further instructions. When the chief trader turned up at the fort gates on December 14, 1828, McLoughlin, who optimistically had imagined McLeod happily and prosperously wintering on the Klamath or in the Sacramento Valley, was astonished and chagrined. He thought his orders had been entirely clear. Some of McLeod's peers believed the unlucky bourgeois had returned merely to see his family.

Governor Simpson, who was at Fort Vancouver when McLeod arrived, had by then evaluated the import of the information Smith had provided concerning the trapping possibilities in California and the likelihood that he and other Americans might return to exploit that field. Thus on December 29, 1828, he gave McLeod new orders.
Southern Party was "to work the whole of the Buona Ventura before its return, which may be expected in the Months of September or October 1830." If fresh hunting grounds were discovered, Simpson told the London directors, "we shall take the necessary measures to occupy them."616

McLeod rejoined his men on the Umpqua during January, 1829, and with Smith's man, John Turner, as guide, started south. Striking the upper Rogue, he followed Ogden's old track up the Applegate and across the Siskiyou Mountains to the Klamath River, which he ascended to Upper Klamath Lake. Game and beaver were both scarce en route, and the men began to kill their horses for food. To make matters worse, Indians pestered the party by stealing traps and horses, but McLeod felt "too much pressed by starvation" to retaliate. Turning southward past Lower Klamath Lake he reached Pit River on March 26, 1829. Here the brigade was assaulted by a band of Indians, but the attackers were repulsed with a loss of seven or eight dead.

Since no one in the party had been this way before, McLeod continued down the Pit traveling "at random." On April 4 an Indian lad attached to the brigade was killed by the natives while visiting his traps. Three days later two other men were attacked at the same task but managed to fight off their assailants.

The Sacramento Valley was reached on April 9, and ten days later the party camped near the mouth of "Canoe River" -- the present Cow Creek -- to build seven canoes for trapping the Sacramento.
This task completed, the brigade passed down the east side of the Sacramento River as far as the Mokelumne River, enjoying considerable success in trapping along the way and in the sloughs of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Delta area. During the summer of 1829 one or more base camps were established in the vicinity of the present Stockton and French Camp.

At an unspecified date, seemingly late summer, McLeod moved his party to the west side of the Sacramento Valley about seventy miles from Sonoma. Several contacts were made with American settlers and, through them, with the mission, and McLeod was able to purchase trade goods and horses, of which he was much in need. The British leader also heard that the coast north of Bodega was "rich in Beaver." Evidently when he read of this report in McLeod's account of the journey, Chief Factor McLoughlin received an impression -- false as it turned out -- which he was a long time in shaking.

The brigade started for home on October 8, 1829. McLeod believed himself too short of ammunition to winter in the valley as Simpson had instructed. He seems to have toyed with the idea of spending the cold months in the upper Sacramento-Klamath River region -- an utterly impracticable dream. Ascending the Sacramento to the mouth of Pit River, he discovered that that stream was actually the "Main Branch" of the former, thus lifting one more piece of the veil hiding the geography of northern California and southern Oregon. Following his outward trail eastward across the mountains, McLeod once more fell on Pit River.
On November 26 he moved up a tributary of the Pit coming in from the north — evidently Fall River. Two days later, somewhere on or near the upper waters of this stream or on the nearby McCloud River, it began to snow, and the party practically came to a halt. By December 4 the snow was so deep that the horses could not get to the grass. Within a week it was seen that none of the animals would survive, and the men "laid by" their meat for provisions and began to make sleds and snowshoes. All the furs were placed en cache in the ground. About 2400 beaver and otter pelts were hidden in this manner after being dried and aired.

At last, on January 14 and 15, 1830, the party started around the north side of Mount Shasta and soon reached Shasta Valley, where all were relieved to find no snow. Evidently leaving most of his men in this spot where game was plentiful, McLeod pushed on ahead to Fort Vancouver to obtain new supplies. Tom McKay had been in this region while detached from Ogden's party early in 1827, so McLeod seems not to have considered it necessary to describe his route northward. Presumably he went largely by way of his outward trail via the Rogue, the Umpqua, and the Willamette. He reached the depot on February 13, 1830.617

McLoughlin was at the end of his patience with McLeod. In an official letter he told the bourgeoys, "you have neither followed the letter or the Spirit of your instructions . . . you ought to have passed the winter in the Valley of the Buenaventura and . . . this injudicious deviation has been the cause of all the disasters
which has befallen your Expedition and consequent loss the Concern
must suffer..."518 After a bitter exchange of correspondence
between the two officers, in which McLeod presented a variety of
excuses for his conduct, McLoughlin preferred charges against
McLeod with Governor Simpson, and McLeod requested permission to go
East to defend himself before the Council of the Northern Department.619

Since it would be many months before a reply could be obtained,
McLoughlin on March 10, 1830, sent the chastened chief trader back
to meet the brigade he had left in the Klamath region, with orders
to hunt "between that and this place till the latter end of July
when I except [expect] you will come with your party."620 McLeod
got at least as far as Shasta Valley, and presumably it was then he
learned that seeping water had ruined the furs he had left en cache.
As specified, he was back at Fort Vancouver on July 28, but his men
brought few beaver.621

Simpson later estimated that the expedition, due to "a whole
Catalogue of unfortunate circumstances," produced a profit of only
£180, an "unfavorable result."622 But in the end the "Little
Emperor" judged McLeod less harshly than did McLoughlin. As early
as 1829 he had realized that McLeod's health had been "injured" by
his hard service in the field, and he had planned to relieve him on
that account.623

McLoughlin was not prepared to give his errant officer any
rest, however. On August 8, 1830, less than two weeks after his
arrival from Shasta Valley, McLeod was sent out once more, this time
with Tom McKay and eleven men to "explore and hunt" on the head-
waters of the Willamette River "which has never been visited by
whites." He was to return at the start of the rainy season. After
passing at least part of the winter at Fort Vancouver, McLeod
"went out" with the express in the spring of 1831 and never again
set foot in the Columbia Department.

McLeod's disastrous expedition to California came close to
putting an end to the Southern Party. On July 31, 1831, Simpson
suggested to the Governor and Committee: "From his [McLeod's]
report of the country and the difficulties to which a party could
be exposed in hunting it we do not think it advisable to maintain
this Expedition." But only a few days thereafter the "Little
Emperor" received word of Orden's return from California with only
a moderate load of pelts but with word that American trappers were
once more in California. On August 10 he directed that another
expedition should be sent to trap on the Sacramento.

Chief Factor McLoughlin also was not yet ready to surrender
the California trade. He had not been greatly impressed by
Orden's results in the Central Valley during 1830, but he believed
worthwhile geographical information had been gained. Evidently
unwilling to give up the momentum achieved, he sent Michel Laframboise
and three men "on a trading excursion" to the Umpqua River in
October, 1830. Laframboise was to stay out all winter and, if he
met McLeod's party in the field he was to pick up as many of the
latter's men as could be spared. With these reinforcements, said
McLoughlin, Laframboise could "extend his excursions farther south."

Evidently Laframboise joined with Thomas McKay before the end of December, 1830, because McLoughlin sent them orders to be at "the place" [Fort Vancouver?] by about March 1 if possible and to have their horses at Champoeg. These instructions were complied with, since both men were at the depot by the middle of March, 1831, McKay to ask for a year's leave of absence and Laframboise to request a raise in salary (which was refused).

It is not clear that any expedition went to the Umpqua or beyond during 1831, although it is quite probable that the region was not entirely neglected. It is known, however, that Laframboise was engaged "below" -- seemingly at the mouth of the Columbia -- in January of 1832, and in April of that year he was sent with a party to punish the "atrocious murder" of two Company employees by the Tillamook Indians. The French-Canadian accomplished this task with dispatch, exacting a retribution of six native lives. He then continued southward in accordance with McLoughlin's orders to "proceed on your trapping expedition and you will either come here this fall, next winter, or send us accounts of your proceedings before the express leaves this [Fort Vancouver] in March."

By May 2, 1832, Laframboise and all his men had "returned" safely from the Tillamook country, although it is not entirely clear to where they returned, perhaps to the Willamette Valley or to the Umpqua. At any rate, he was soon at the latter place, to which
McLoughlin on May 18 sent a party to bring back the furs collected up to that point. The "Big Doctor" seized the occasion to tell Laframboise to keep a journal and to enforce discipline in his camp. It seems clear that McLoughlin rather expected the party to reach the Sacramento Valley, since when sending John Work off for that place in August, 1832, he said, "If you meet Michel Laframboise you will assume the Direction of the two parties." But a few days later he told Work that he had received information indicating that Laframboise was "hunting along the Coast following [Jedediah] Smith's tract [track], and it is certain he cannot be in the Valley this fall." McLoughlin seems to have forgotten Michel's changeable temperament.

From the Umpqua Laframboise started southwest across the coastal range to the Pacific. Finding the country "too mountainous," however, he returned to the Umpqua and followed "McLeods tract" of 1829 to the Sacramento Valley.

The number of people in the Canadian's brigade is difficult to determine, since persons were added and subtracted at various times after the departure from Fort Vancouver. On January 22, 1833, when an exact count was made, the party consisted of eighteen European men, twelve women, sixteen children and seventeen Indian men, a total of sixty-three. With this mixed group Laframboise made his way south to San Francisco Bay, which he reached on October 15, 1832. He established a base camp, evidently in the region of the present Stockton and French Camp. From that point he made a visit to Mission
San José. In January, 1833, he moved northward towards the Marysville Buttes, having received reports that Work was there.

The two parties joined as has already been discussed and continued together until May 13, when Leframboise and his brigade left Work near the northern California coast with the intention of falling on "Smith's road" and returning to Fort Vancouver along the coast. Very soon, however, he headed inland, probably until he reached his outward route. He was back at Fort Vancouver on June 15, 1833. All were safe, except for one man who had been killed by a bear. McLoughlin was relieved to see the party. Indians had reported that the brigade had been attacked by natives. In fact, the "Big Doctor" had been so worried that in January, 1833, he had sent a small expedition to the Umpqua to investigate.

McLoughlin reported that Leframboise had found "very few Beaver" during his homeward trip. But the Canadian repeated what "cLeod had said: "that the Bay of St. Francisco abounds more in Beaver than any part of the Country that he saw between this and that place." The "Southern Party's" returns amounted to 755 large beaver, 74 small beaver, and 152 other pelts.

In his usual hard-driving fashion, McLoughlin allowed Leframboise little rest at the depot. By October 13, 1833, he and a small party were well on their way to the Umpqua when they met Work's exhausted homeward-bound brigade north of Elk Mountain on the western side of the Willamette Valley. After giving Work some much-needed provisions, Michel proceeded on his way south.
It is probable that Laframboise remained in the Umpqua region and along the nearby coast during the winter. In mid April, 1834, he sent letters from an unspecified location stating that he had recently had an encounter with Indians "on the S side of the Umpquah mountain" and had killed eleven of them. And evidently McLoughlin expected the Canadian interpreter to still be in the general Umpqua area when on May 21, 1834, he directed John Work to take a party of trappers there and "endeavor to join Laframboise and . . . unite the two parties into one that they may proceed this fall to the valley." 

This junction was never made, because by the time Work reached the Umpqua Laframboise had already moved south. But Work left some provisions with an Indian chief for Laframboise's use on his homeward journey. "Should "ichell be sick as was my case last year," Work commented in his journal, "these things would be a great acquisition to him." By summer Laframboise was in California with a base near Sonoma. The Company's officers thought the governor of California had agreed to permit the concern's hunters to operate freely in the Central Valley, but Laframboise was challenged by Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, commandant at Sonoma, and when he could produce no proof that he was a Company employee he was "ordered off." On his way home Laframboise came upon the very ill Boston school teacher, Hall J. Kelley, who had been traveling north with a band of horse herders under Ewing Young. The Canadian nursed Kelley until he could be moved and then brought him to Fort Vancouver.
Vallejo's rebuff was quite a shock to McLoughlin, who for a number of years had attempted to develop friendly relations with the California authorities with a view to obtaining leave to hunt and trade in the province. Pending a resolution of the matter, he was determined not to further aggravate the situation. Thus, on April 7, 1835, when he once more sent Laframboise southward, he directed Michel "to hunt the country along the coast, between the Umpqua and the Clamet River, and ... you may erect a small Fort in that part of the country, and trade with the Indians." As for the trappers, he added, "on no account must they go to the Valley of the Bonaventura." The "Big Doctor" might just as well have given orders to the wind.

When word of Laframboise's encounter with Vallejo reached Governor Simpson at Red River that summer, he blamed Michel for not carrying proper credentials and thus being forced to return "without making any hunt worthy of notice." The "Little Emperor" believed the differences with the California authorities could be settled by diplomatic means, but he maintained that Laframboise, "though zealous," was not the man for such a mission. McLoughlin was ordered to send a "strong well appointed party" to California under command of a commissioned gentleman or a clerk. He suggested Chief Trader John McLeod.

By the time these instructions reached Fort Vancouver by the fall express, Laframboise was long off in the field, and McLoughlin had heard nothing of him. When word of this situation reached
Simpson months later, he bowed to the inevitable and relented to the extent of promising that Laframboise, if successful, could be given command of a further expedition. 644

Meanwhile, the Governor and Committee in London made a major policy statement concerning the Southern expeditions. On December 8, 1835, they told McLoughlin that friendly relations with the California authorities "should be assiduously cultivated" and that as long as a rapport continued "it is very desirable to hunt the Buena Ventura Valley, and other waters flowing into the Bay of St. Francisco, otherwise the American trappers . . . will assuredly push there . . . and not be satisfied with hunting those Rivers, but will go on . . . to the Columbia, and there will get fresh equipped by Wyeth's people. We therefore desire that a trapping party be always kept employed in that quarter, while their Hunts pay." 645

As might have been anticipated, Laframboise did not confine his 1835-1836 expedition to southern Oregon. He later told McLoughlin that he found no beaver in that region so had pushed on down the "shores of the Pacific" to the vicinity of the Russian settlements. Avoiding them, he entered the Sacramento Valley. Fortunately for Michel on April 24, 1836, he brought back 1057 beaver skins plus other furs, giving his third expedition to California a profit of $805.68. McLoughlin saw fit to overlook Michel's disobedience of orders. 646

Laframboise reported that sea otters were "plentiful" on the California coast, so in May, 1836, McLoughlin sent him off in the
Company's schooner, Cadboro, to hunt them. Three months later he was back with a mere twenty-three otter pelts. Not one to willingly endure such losses, the "Big Doctor" ordered Michel on September 5, 1836, to take twenty-three men and spend the winter hunting "the Clamet country." 647

It would appear that Michel returned to the depot from this excursion about February, 1837; or if he did not return he received fresh instructions at about that time from McLoughlin while still in the field, because sometime about the first of March he began a "four months hunt" to the "Bay of St. Francisco." He was back at Fort Vancouver on July 6, 1837, with 1436 beaver skins and 413 otter pelts, a haul valued at about £2314. The clear profit on this expedition was about £800. 648 McLoughlin was highly pleased, although James Douglas later said the brigade had made only "fair hunts." 649

Stimulated by these results, Dr. McLoughlin planned an ambitious and complicated foray on the fur resources of California. On August 1, 1837, Lafremboise -- now ranked as a postmaster with an annual salary of £100 -- set out in command of a party of twenty-seven men to trap on Feather River and to "endeavour to reach the entrance of the Rio Colorado in the Gulf of California." He was then to be at Trinidad Bay on the northern California coast by May 15, 1838. If he had by that time found a good place to continue hunting he would be re-equipped from the Cadboro for another excursion. But if he had not located a good trapping ground, he was to return to Fort Vancouver overland, driving a herd of California cattle before him. 650
As was routine with Laframboise, things did not work out exactly that way. He reached the Sacramento Valley on November 15, 1837, having been slowed by the "weak and reduced state" of his horses. Finding too much snow on the mountains drained by Feather River, he continued on to familiar ground about the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers with San Francisco Bay. Here he established a base camp for the winter and sent out his trappers to scour the surrounding waters. They were remarkably successful, taking about 2700 skins prior to May 1, 1838. On that day Laframboise started his brigade toward Trinidad Bay to meet the Cadboro.

Unfortunately, Laframboise seems not to have known exactly where Trinidad Bay was, so although he reached the coast by the appointed date, he was about one hundred miles south of where the Cadboro was waiting for him. By June 6 the Canadian had decided that some mishap must have occurred to the vessel, so he moved his camp about thirty miles into the interior and told his people to wait there until August 1 when, if they had not heard from him, they were to move to the Sacramento Valley until he could rejoin them. He then set out with seven companions for Fort Vancouver to obtain fresh instructions. After making his way "through many dangers" he reached the depot on July 8, 1838.651

Chief Trader James Douglas, who was in charge of the Fort Vancouver District while McLoughlin was away on furlough, was greatly surprised and disappointed at this turn of events. He cast about for some way to get Laframboise back to his brigade, which was
represented as being in a "forlorn state." His problem was resolved on July 23 when the Cadboro turned up. The schooner's captain had waited for the Southern Party until July 8 before accepting the fact that Laframboise would not appear.

Douglas quickly reprovisioned the vessel and sent her back to keep the rendezvous. On board were Laframboise, his men, and "several recruits." Also along was Chief Trader John McLeod, sent to receive the brigade's furs and to hand out the fresh outfit. Douglas ordered Laframboise to go back to the Sacramento Valley after getting his new traps and supplies and to hunt there during the winter. Then, in May, 1839, he was to return to the coast and await a vessel. If none arrived within two months he was to try again in October. If there still was no vessel, he was to go "back to the" sea" again on May 15 and October 25, 1840. Laframboise was expected to maintain a position in the valley or if necessary to extend his operations "into the more populous country" southwest of California.

The Cadboro skirted the California shore from Cape Mendocino southward, but no sign of the Southern Party could be seen. Stopping off Fort Ross, McLeod was hospitably welcomed by the Russians and invited to use the harbor at Bodega as a base while seeking the elusive trappers. A letter was sent to General Vallejo at Sonoma, who agreed to furnish horses, and soon Laframboise and ten men were on their way to the Sacramento Valley. The camp was found on Feather River, and all hurried to Bodega with their returns. The furs were put on board the Cadboro, supplies were received for the winter hunt,
and the entire brigade set out to "try their fortunes in the same field as last year, where, from the abundance of Beaver, there is still a fair prospect of success." Since Laframboise now knew where Trinidad Bay was, Douglas was hopeful that, come May, 1839, the "anxiety and derangement" of 1838 could be avoided.654

Laframboise was back on the Sacramento River by October 19, 1838, but his hunting in the Central Valley was disturbed "by the enmity of General Vallejo . . . who repeatedly ordered him to leave the country under penalty of seizure." The Mexican officer was suspicious of the Company's men and made allegations against them of an unspecified nature. But Laframboise could not leave his base camp without sacrificing the winter's hunt. In this "distressed" state, he made an agreement with Governor Juan B. Alverado to assist the government in punishing Indian raiders who were making life in California's frontier settlements almost unbearable. From that moment annoyance from local authorities ceased, but the Canadian was "so completely scared" that he determined to leave for the Columbia as soon as the trails became passable in the spring. Meanwhile, however, a detached party of eight men had penetrated two hundred miles south of the brigade's "present range" and had encountered friendly natives and an "abundance of Beaver."655

Not waiting to go to the coast as ordered, Laframboise hit the homeward trail. On April 30, 1839, a small advance party reached the depot with word that the brigade was on its way. Douglas's immediate reaction was displeasure at Laframboise's disobedience
of precise and detailed orders. His next thought was that he would have to make new arrangements for outfitting the next expedition, and he ordered the manager at Fort Walla Walla to send down forty horses by land. 656

When the irrepressible Canadian arrived during June, however, he related his difficulties with the California officials in such a graphic manner that Douglas began to view his conduct "in a very excusable light," the more so because the expedition had suffered no actual damage. In fact, Douglas termed the hunt "very successful," as indeed it had been. The Southern Party for Outfit 1838-1839 was credited with a profit of £960.18s.7d. 657

Douglas had no intention of withdrawing from California "while it continues to afford profitable employment." He chose to interpret Alvarado's acceptance of Laframboise's "proffered aid" as "expressive certainly, of no desire that our visits, to the confines of his jurisdiction should cease." But in a diplomatically worded note he found it necessary to disavow certain of the engagements made by his Canadian subordinate. In making his offers, Douglas told Alvarado, Laframboise had "entered upon a province foreign to his duties." But, added the temporary Columbia manager, "we shall, in fact, hold ourselves bound to observe the provisions of the treaty . . . as far as consistent with the laws of our country." Laframboise would go to the "Tulares" -- the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley -- and exert a "powerful influence" over the natives there to keep the peace, but Douglas said nothing about joining in any punitive campaigns
against the Indians. In fact, he held as "unadmissible" those clauses requiring offensive action, but he would "most cheerfully perform" those clauses otherwise aimed at promoting "the quiet and security of the country."

Laframboise was given his orders on July 14, 1839. Douglas told him to go "immediately" to the Central Valley, to lay in a supply of winter provisions, and then to go to "the Lake you found last spring [Tulare Lake?]." He was to hunt there as long as he took beaver, though he could trap on Feather River, San Francisco Bay, or elsewhere if necessary. "We will not make war upon the Indians." Laframboise was told, but he was to "speak to them against stealing horses" and to try to keep them quiet. He was further instructed to keep as far from the coast as possible "in order, to avoid intercourse with the Settlements," and he was to be back at Vancouver by at least June 20, 1840.

Laframboise got away on July 20, 1839. His party, besides himself, consisted of thirty-three "engaged trappers and Indians" and Joseph McLoughlin, the "Big Doctor's" son and "a young man of determined character." Unhappily, young McLoughlin developed a severe "pulmonary attack" on Rogue River and had to return. "This misfortune," said Douglas a few months later, "has weakened the effective strength of the Expedition but Laframboise must do his best alone, as it is impossible to reinforce him for this season."

Little is known about the activities of Laframboise's 1839-1840 expedition beyond the fact that he arrived back at Fort Vancouver on
June 22, 1840, only two days late! McLoughlin, by then back from Europe, rather churlishly described the returns as "tolerable." As a matter of fact they were slightly better than those of the previous year -- 1611 beaver and 695 land otter, for a total profit of £1111.17s.6d. 662

The Governor and Committee had been watching the progress of the Southern Expedition with much interest. On March 20, 1839, they told Governor Simpson that the Snake and California parties were "productive of much benefit in checking the approach of rival expeditions," and in "collecting furs that could never come into our possession by any other means." The directors continued: "we are therefore desirous they should be reinforced and maintained in full vigour," but they cautioned that "positive orders" should be given to the leaders to have as little communication as possible with strangers and to avoid the settlements in California as far as was "consistent with perfect safety." 663

But by the summer of 1840 the directors had heard of Laframboise's troubles with the California authorities, and they were particularly disturbed by his "treaty" with Governor Alvarado, which they termed a "most indiscreet proceeding." They pointed to the Canadian's "repeated instances of a lack of good judgment" and to his lack of firmness. Though admitting that he was "very efficient," they considered him ineligible for such an important command." While Laframboise might continue as "an officer of the expedition" they recommended that "the principal command be placed in better hands." 664
While these observations would not reach McLoughlin for some months, the Columbia manager had been thinking along the same lines himself. He told the directors that he had intended to appoint someone else to lead the 1840-1841 Southern expedition "but we had so much business to attend that I could not spare an Officer and prevailed upon Mr. Laframboise to continue in charge." So the corpulent little Canadian was once more at the head of the Southern Party when it departed from Fort Vancouver perhaps on September 23, 1840, or even during October. On September 14 McLoughlin had written to Laframboise, saying: "I expect you will make your people attend to their religious duties. You will have prayers said morning and evening and you will keep order and regularity in your camp." The party was to hunt "South of the Umpqua" and was to return "about the usual time," the next June. There were twenty-four men in the brigade in addition to the leader.

Again, little is known about the activities of the 1840-1841 expedition, except that it operated in the Central Valley of California. Laframboise is reported to have camped at the Marysville Buttes for "several months," and at least two of his men cached traps there. This location was visited despite a letter which had been received at Vancouver during the summer from "Captain" John A. Sutter, a Swiss adventurer who in 1839 had established a settlement on the site of today's Sacramento. Sutter, wishing to keep the Central Valley beaver for himself and acting upon the authority of California government, had ordered the Southern Party not to return
to "the Tulares" [the San Joaquin Valley]. But McLoughlin chose to ignore this communication, "having no information that he was an accredited agent of the government." 668

On its homeward journey in the spring of 1841, Laframboise's brigade helped to drive north a large flock of sheep and a herd of cattle which James Douglas had purchased for the Company in the San Francisco Bay region. It is doubtful that the trappers enjoyed this unusual duty. The stock was delivered to the Tualatin Plains at the north end of the Willamette Valley during June, 1841, so Laframboise probably met his deadline for reaching Fort Vancouver. The returns were satisfactory though not spectacular -- 1590 beaver and 2-1/2 pounds of "beaver coating," producing a profit of $1408.14s.11d. 669

The Laframboise of 1841 was a different man from the exuberant voyageur of earlier years who was reputed to have had a native "wife" in every tribe he encountered. He had married the daughter of a fellow Canadian in 1839, he had developed a Willamette Valley farm which was extensive for its time and place, and he was dissatisfied with his lack of advancement in the Company. Prior to leaving Fort Vancouver in 1840 he had requested a furlough to visit Canada in 1841. 670

Thus he evidently did not consider himself available for another "South Party!" at least in the immediate future. On September 5, 1841, he visited the Willamette Valley camp of Lieutenant George Foster Emmons, a member of the United States Exploring
Expedition, who was putting together a party to investigate the country between the Columbia River and San Francisco Bay. Laframboise "evinced a disposition" to accompany this expedition, but Emmons withheld "all encouragement" when he learned that the Canadian "had just rec'd a letter from Dr. McLoughlin directing him to organize his [Southern] party immediately for the regular annual trip to California." Emmons did, however, enlist several other men who were to remain in California and trap for the Hudson's Bay Company during the winter. 671

But on October 12, 1841, when the Southern Party started for California it was commanded not by Michel Laframboise but by Clerk Francis Ermatinger. 672 Obviously, if Emmons was correct in his understanding that Michel had originally been offered the leadership, something had happened between late August or early September and early October. That something may have been merely that McLoughlin for at least a year had been intending to change the command of the California brigade and that Ermatinger, an able and experienced veteran of the Flathead and Snake Country trades, was suddenly available, having reached the depot from Fort Hall on September 29, 1841. 673 But there probably was more to it than that.

During March, 1841, Chief Factor James Douglas returned to Fort Vancouver from California, where he had, among other things, negotiated an agreement with the authorities permitting the Company's trappers to operate freely "in all parts of the uncultivated frontier" after certain conditions were met. 674 McLoughlin was elated. He
reported to Governor Simpson on April 7, 1841, that beaver were said "still to abound" at San Francisco Bay. If Laframboise could take 6790 beaver between 1835 and 1839 with only a few men, he added, "we have every reason to think they will do much better now that they have a free range of the country." He dreamed of organizing a force of one hundred trappers, under "a commissioned gentleman" assisted by two "active clerks" and composed of "decent well behaved men," to hunt as far south as the mouth of the Colorado River "where Beaver is said to be more abundant than in the Bay of St. Francisco." 675

In addition, Governor George Simpson reached Fort Vancouver on August 25, 1841, inspecting Company establishments while on his famous "overland journey" around the world. 676 He too, of course, had heard of the arrangement made by Douglas, and on June 20, 1841, he had told the London directors: "I think it will be advisable to increase that expedition to at least 50 men . . . and place them under the charge of a Commissioned Officer . . . for the purpose of making a more extended range of country . . . . I hope to be able to reach Fort Vancouver in sufficient time to get this expedition reorganized previous to its return [to California]." 677 And both he and McLoughlin were well aware by that time of the Committee's belief that Laframboise lacked the good judgment required for the command of a major expedition to a province where "unpleasant accidents" might occur at any moment. It is quite probable, then, that Simpson and McLoughlin discussed the need for a change in leadership before the governor departed for the Northwest Coast on
Francis Ermatinger was not at all happy at his sudden appointment to the Southern Party. His request for permission to go East had been refused by Governor Simpson in a "heartless letter." and his hoped-for promotion to a chief tradership had been delayed. In return, Ermatinger determined to show Sir George that "there is two ways of doing our duty" -- the right way and the slack way.

He was still in the Willamette Valley on October 20, 1841, getting his party organized and equipped. Evidently he started southward shortly thereafter. Simpson was later to blame the failure of the expedition on this delay in completing arrangements.

Regardless of who was at fault, the season was late, as Ermatinger was soon to discover. It was reported in California that his brigade was "larger than usual." One writer has said that it numbered about one hundred persons, including women and children.

Ermatinger evidently took the usual route by way of the Willamette Valley and the Rogue River to the Klamath River in the Shasta area. Either before or after reaching the Klamath -- Governor Simpson who told the story seems to have been confused as to the geography -- the party crossed a "mountain" -- probably the Siskiyous -- where the men had to walk for three days through snow two feet deep.

It is possible, however, that Ermatinger took McLeod's route of 1829 east of Mount Shasta, since Simpson seems to indicate that this notorious "Pit mountain" was the "very ground" where the unfortunate McLeod lost all his furs and "nearly three hundred horses."
On December 12 Ermatinger and his people were camped on "a petty tributary of the Sacramento." During the night heavy rains caused the stream to rise nine feet. The next day the party struggled through deep mud and water to higher ground. One Indian woman and several horses had not reached this sanctuary by nightfall, and the next morning they were found dead, the horses still standing "stiff and ghastly" with their loads on their backs. 683 By December 27 the brigade was somewhere in the general vicinity of Sutter's Fort. 684 Ermatinger next seems to have taken his party to the west side of the valley. In January, 1842, an American encountered the brigade on Putah Creek near the present Winters. 685 And according to Simpson a camp was established on Cache Creek, from which the trappers moved out in small groups to ply their trade, largely about San Francisco Bay. They had orders to reassemble at a place "two days distant from Sonoma" by April 25. Ermatinger then went to this unstated location and set up a base camp at which the women and children could await the return of their men. 686

While at this camp the British leader received a "rather authoritative mandate" from Sutter to present himself at the latter's establishment and "intimating" that the Company's men had no right to hunt in California. "Mr. Ermatinger," later wrote Governor Simpson, "did not consider it necessary to pay any other attention to Mr. Sutter's notification, that to reply that he did not mean to comply ... nor to respect his assumed authority." 687
Aside from such occasional administrative duties, Ermatinger seems to have done little during the next several months except travel about to the settlements of central California, visiting with his old friend William G. Rae at the newly established Company trading post at Yerba Buena -- the present San Francisco -- and enjoying the scenery. As he later told his brother: "I passed a jovial winter of it . . ., let the trappers take care of themselves while I was galloping about the country to the American shipping, to Rae's &c."688

But this galloping about was interrupted on one important occasion. Governor Simpson had reached San Francisco by ship on December 21, 1841, and within a few weeks he visited Sonoma. Desiring to see Ermatinger but not knowing where he was, the governor left a note which soon reached its man. The bourgeois, finding that Simpson had left Yerba Buena for Monterey, acquired a "Spanish costume" and followed on horseback. The meeting was to have important consequences. Ermatinger convinced Simpson that the Sacramento Valley and the San Francisco Bay region were "so much exhausted as no longer to afford remunerating occupation to a trapping party," though how the clerk could have arrived at such a conclusion in such a short time is a mystery. The governor also gained the impression that the Colorado River at the head of the Gulf of California, "which was considered the Eldorado of the West," was "now totally destitute of fur bearing animals."689

In November, 1841, Simpson had been eager to maintain the Southern party "from year to year while any material benefit can
be derived from its operations." On March 1, 1842, after his talk with Ermatinger, Simpson told the London directors: "it does not appear that any benefit can arise from continuing our trapping expedition within Mexican territory. it has therefore been determined to break up the party in the course of this year, if no other promising field for its operations be discovered."

Ermatinger was back at his base camp to meet his hunters by about April 25, "the latest date at which the swarms of mosquitoes would allow them to carry on their trapping in the haunts of the beaver and the otter." Soon afterwards he started north for Fort Vancouver, driving along a herd of eighty-three cattle which he had purchased as a private speculation, an action entirely contrary to Company regulations. Upon reaching the Willamette Valley he sold the animals on his own account before Chief Factor McLoughlin knew they had arrived. But little happened in Oregon that did not soon come to the attention of the "Big Doctor," and he required Ermatinger to assign the proceeds of the sale, less expenses, to the concern. Further, Ermatinger had the dubious honor of being reprimanded by McLoughlin, Simpson, and the Governor and Committee for this folly.

Ermatinger reached the depot by July 6, 1842, when he accepted the long-sought parchment indicating his promotion to the rank of chief trader. In the words of McLoughlin, his expedition had "made poorly out." His returns were only 763 beaver, 4-1/2 pounds of beaver coating, and 387 land otter -- less than half those for
Outfit 1840. He had indeed shown that there were two ways of doing his duty.

At Honolulu on March 1, 1842, Governor Simpson gave McLoughlin specific orders not to send trapping parties to any part of the country "South of the Shasta Mountains" and to break up the Southern Party "unless you can find useful employment for it in the Snake country." McLoughlin protested at length against this decision but gained only limited permission for "the re-equipment of that expedition from Fort Vancouver" should "Mr. Ermatinger's hunts during the present campaign, and his report as to future prospects" be "sufficiently encouraging."

Ermatinger's returns were by no means encouraging, but McLoughlin did not disband the Southern Party. Instead, he sent it back to California. While admitting that Ermatinger had made "only a poor hunt," the "Big Doctor" excused his disobedience of orders by claiming that the expedition had paid for itself and that "the men who composed it were too old, and had too large families" to be employed at Fort Vancouver or to be permitted to hunt in its vicinity, "as it would afford an opportunity to our opponents to tamper with them." Besides, as McLoughlin had earlier told Simpson, he believed it was "our interest" to hunt California "as much as we can, and as quick as possible while it is in our power.

On June 21, 1842, the Council of the Northern Department, in the absence of Governor Simpson, appointed Ermatinger to the command of the "Bonaventura Expedition." Evidently Simpson had not told
the Chief Factors and Chief Traders of his intention to break up the party. But by the time word of Ermatinger's appointment reached Fort Vancouver by the fall express, the new chief trader had been married to Mrs. McLoughlin's granddaughter and sent off to take charge of Cowlitz Farm. Also, Ermatinger had been promised that he could go "out" in the spring of 1843; therefore McLoughlin did not consider him available for service in California. 700

McLoughlin thus fell back on Michel Laframboise once more. The veteran postmaster consented to go, but for one trip only. The brigade left "in the autumn of 1842" bound for the "Bay of St. Francisco" on an expedition intended to last two years. 701 As usual, McLoughlin was too sanguine. The trip was far shorter than anticipated.

Laframboise reached the San Francisco Bay area and established a base camp where he spent most of the winter. But the Canadian was no disciplinarian, and he lost control of his men. Exactly what happened is not entirely clear, but evidently the trappers obtained liquor from the settlements and spent much of their time carousing, shooting Indians, and stealing horses. It is reported that the local authorities ordered them from the country. There probably was some truth to these charges, since at least one member of the party, Antoine Dechamp, spent some time in a California jail. 702

One thing is certain: the beaver returns were terrible. After the winter hunt the pelts were taken to Yerba Buena and turned over to the Company's agent, William G. Rae, for shipment to Vancouver by water. Later the returns from "a poor Spring hunt" were also
delivered to Rae. On August 27, 1843, Rae reported to London:
"The Company's trapping Party under the charge of Mr Laframboise left the Sacramento a few days ago, they have made out miserably I do not think the whole hunt exceeds 650 Otter and beaver skins." 

The brigade returned to Fort Vancouver on October 10, 1843. Its hunt had indeed been miserable -- 462 large beaver, 66 small beaver, 12 pounds of beaver coating, and 173 land otters -- but the expedition had paid for itself and even, McLoughlin later claimed, produced a profit of £477.

The conduct of the men had been so "bad" that Laframboise refused to return to California under any consideration. "I am," he told the "Big Doctor," "through the mercy of God come back safe because I gave way to my men; if I had assumed the tone of master I would have been murdered by them. I will not venture again."

Laframboise retired to his Willamette farm after this trip. In June, 1844, Governor Simpson received the news that Laframboise had left the service with the ungracious comment that he was "a very unfit man for conducting a party" -- harsh words for an employee who had served on the Columbia for thirty-two years.

McLoughlin was not yet willing to abandon the Southern expeditions however. On November 15, 1843, he told the Governor and Committee he intended to send the brigade to hunt "this winter ... about the Umpqua." Although no accounts of this expedition have yet been seen by the present writer, it seems that nineteen or twenty trappers did leave for the south on this occasion; there is no indication in records yet seen as to who the leader was. This brigade was still
designated the "Southern Party." It is quite probable that the brigade did not reach central California, because on July 4, 1844, McLoughlin told the Governor and Committee that "since 1842 [Outfit 1842] we have had no hunting parties in that direction."711

The returns of the 1843-1844 (Outfit 1843) "South Party" were 586 large beaver, 166 small beaver, 13 pounds of beaver coating, and 121 land otters.712 McLoughlin calculated the "gain" from these relatively few furs to be £425.4.1.713

Evidently even before this expedition left Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1843 McLoughlin had received a letter written to him by the Governor and Committee on December 21, 1842, directing him to "either break up that party, if there be no prospect of employing it to advantage in California, or change the scene of its operations to some quarter promising more favorable results."714 Seemingly convinced at last of "the impoverished state of the country." McLoughlin bowed to the will of his superiors and disbanded the Southern Party. Personnel records show that a high percentage of the trappers who made up that roughneck band retired to the Willamette during 1844.715 The "Bonaventura Expedition" or "South Party" was no more.

Miscellaneous trapping parties

The Snake Party and the Southern or Buenaventura Party were by far the most important Hudson's Bay Company trapping brigades in the Columbia Department. They were the only ones to be assigned
separate headings in the concern's accounts and personnel records. They were organized on a continuing basis over a period of years, composed of a body of employees and freemen which, while individual members dropped out and were replaced by others at frequent intervals, contained a solid core of veterans. These brigades, with rare exceptions, were the largest trapping parties in the Columbia Department, and their primary function was trapping; trading ordinarily was a secondary consideration. Almost without a break they went out annually according to predetermined schedules. In short, they were institutions.

But they were not the only trapping parties to operate in the Columbia Department. At least one other, the Flathead Party, had a longer life than either, extending, under the Hudson's Bay Company, from the 1820s to the 1850s. But the Flathead Party generally was composed of fewer men, and its primary purpose was to accompany the Flathead Indians to their buffalo-hunting grounds on the "plains" and to trade for furs, leather, grease, dried meat, and other native products. Beginning in the early 1830s and continuing as long as American trappers were active in the Rockies and the Snake Country, the Flathead expeditions concentrated on bartering as many pelts from these rivals as possible. Almost always, however, this brigade was accompanied by trappers who hunted as opportunity afforded.

Similarly, after 1832 the Snake Party -- which long retained this designation in the Company's books -- shifted its emphasis to trading, both with the Indians and with American trappers. After
1837 Fort Hall on the Snake River was included in the operations of the Snake Party, and trading with emigrants and, later, with Mormon settlers, became a large part of its business. Here again, as has already been mentioned, trappers operated in conjunction with the "Snake Party," sometimes in considerable strength.

A number of other trapping parties went out from posts in the Columbia Department. In fact, when an establishment found itself with idle employees temporarily on its hands, a frequent practice was to send the men out to hunt beaver.

A few examples will serve to show the motives behind the dispatch of these small parties. Unfortunately, the results of these expeditions cannot be determined, since their returns were mingled with those of the posts to which they were attached.

In the Fort Vancouver District report for 1826-1827, Chief Factor McLoughlin noted that there was "a Good deal of Beaver Y et in the District but the Natives are so Indolent and so Independent of us they will not hunt." Therefore, he added: "we could Employ from twenty to thirty trappers to Great Advantage . . . . we have brought the Indians of this District to that state that we can disperse trappers in small parties (if we had them) of three or four men." 716

By 1829 McLoughlin had two parties in the field, and he told a fellow employee that he intended to keep one band "constantly" in the Cowlitz region and another in the Willamette, although whether these expeditions were for trading or trapping or both is not clear. 717

During the same year the "Big Doctor" told John Work, in charge of the Colville District, that it was not to "our Interest to Induce
freemen to remain about the flat Heads" and urged him to attempt to arrange for these people to "join next year some of our trapping parties." Also in 1829 Governor Simpson noted that the fur trade at Fort Vancouver had shown a decline. "But," he commented, "there are a few spots within reach of small Trapping parties, which may through their labors, keep up the returns to near about their present standard for several years to come."

In September, 1829, Clerk James Birnie wrote to McLoughlin from a temporary trading station he was managing at The Dalles and suggested that a trapping party should be dispatched from that point. McLoughlin was receptive to the idea and even ordered veteran François Payette down from the Colville District to assist in the project. It is doubtful, however, that this expedition ever took the field, because Birnie did not long remain at The Dalles.

In general, there is very little information presently available concerning these miscellaneous small parties. Apparently there is a fertile field here awaiting some future researcher.

Fur brigades, trappers, and the trapper's life

In the vernacular of the British fur trade, a brigade ordinarily was a flotilla of canoes or boats, most often carrying supplies or men to the field or fur returns to the depots. Only occasionally was the term applied to trapping parties or to major pack trains. According to E. M. Chittenden, the name was sometimes employed in the earlier years of the American fur trade to designate trapping parties or supply trains but "quickly fell into disuse."
To Hudson's Bay Company employees west of the Rockies, the term "the brigade" meant exclusively the annual party which each spring brought the fur returns from New Caledonia and the interior Columbia Basin posts to Fort Vancouver by a combination of canoe, pack train, and boat travel and which each summer returned with the "outfits" for the interior establishments. The two largest trapping and trading parties, those to the Snake Country and to the south of Fort Vancouver, were routinely called "the Snake Expedition" or "the Snake Party" and the "Buenaventura (or Bonaventura) Expedition," "the Umpqua Party," "the Southern Expedition," "the Southern Party," or "the South Party" respectively. The word "brigade" in reference to these expeditions is seldom found in the records. 722

The Southern Party and the Snake Party were set up as distinct units in the Company's accounts and personnel records. That is, they were administratively on a par with the trading posts in the Columbia Department; their profits and losses were computed individually and not ordinarily lumped in with those of an establishment as were those, say, of the Flathead expedition. 723

Whether a party made a profit or loss in any business year depended on the ratio of "costs" to "credits." The costs were classified as supplies, servants' wages, and "Servants credits furs" (amounts credited to an encâgé for his share of the furs brought in and, probably, to a free trapper for the pelts he sold to the Company). The credits were the "returns" (the furs brought to the depot by the party), the "book debts" (amounts owed by trappers and others for goods and supplies purchased from the Company), and "inventory." 724
Preparations for the two major trapping parties began considerably in advance of the return of the groups from the previous year's expeditions. Although circumstances sometimes resulted in variations in the routine, the departmental manager usually began to take steps in the spring to bring to hand the supplies and animals which would be required for the expeditions leaving each fall. His estimates of the needs were based on requisitions previously submitted by the leaders of the parties. For example, in March, 1829, Chief Factor McLoughlin took steps to make sure that Chief Trader John W. Dease, in charge of the Colville District, sent forty bushels of peas and corn to Walla Walla for use of the Snake Expedition.

Horse equipment, commonly called "agrèses" or "agréts" by the traders, largely came from Flathead Post, where buffalo skins and other types of hides were obtained from the natives. This term included such items as aphisimons (or aapechemons) (pieces of buffalo robes used as saddle cloths), parfleches (leather or skin containers for carrying provisions or personal effects; roughly, saddle bags), pack saddles, and pack cords. Leather lodges and deerskins also came from Flathead. These items were sent to Fort Colville, the headquarters of the district to which Flathead Post belonged, and then were forwarded to Walla Walla and Fort Vancouver, often by the annual brigades, to be ready for issue when the trapping parties were organized.

An idea of the quantities of such articles required for a single expedition is provided by the requisition for the "Snake Outfit"
1831" which Peter Skene Ogden submitted on behalf of John Work to Chief Trader Francis Heron at Fort Colville on August 21, 1830, more than a year in advance of the time when the items would be needed. The document read as follows:

Requisition
6 Leather Lodges -- 40 Appichimons, 40 Pack Saddles -- 20 Par Fleches, 100 Prime Chev[euil] Skins 60 Elk Skins, 200 fath[oms] Pack Cords -- 3 New Boats [needed to take furs to depot and return upstream with supplies].

Horses were required in large numbers for the trapping expeditions, and they were the most troublesome necessities to obtain. Alexander Ross in 1823 estimated that each hunter should have from two to four horses for trips to the Snake Country. About a year later Governor Simpson said that each man needed "three Horses to do his duty well." John Work believed that a trapper required four good horses to work his traps, transport his supplies and gear, and pack out his pelts. Additional animals were necessary for carrying the expedition's trade goods, provisions, and other supplies, while the men bringing their families along required mounts and pack animals for them also. As an example, Ross's Snake Party of 1824 consisted of 35 men, 25 women, and 64 children, a total of 144; they required the use of 392 horses.

The horses and mules brought back from an expedition were taken out on the next trip. To "recruit" such animals after the arduous service in the Snake Country the Company maintained a grazing farm several miles from Fort Nez Percé. Horses coming in with the Southern Party were at first left with Indians or settlers in the
French Prairie-Champoeg area of the Willamette Valley. These persons proved to be unreliable caretakers, however, so a grazing farm was developed on the Tualatin Plains, west of the present Portland. But the numbers of such "veterans" were always insufficient. Due to starvation, lack of water, poisonous plants, thefts and attacks by Indians, cold weather, slaughter by the trappers for food, and other vicissitudes, every expedition took a heavy toll of the horses. On McLeod's 1829 expedition to California the loss was one hundred percent.

The great bulk of the replacements were obtained through Fort Nez Percés, where they were traded from the Nez Percé Indians of the Clearwater-Grande Ronde region. In 1829 Governor Simpson stated that the Company depended on that tribe "for an annual supply of about 250 Horses." Not all of these animals were always required for trapping parties, but the number purchased for the brigades was substantial. In August, 1831, for instance, McLoughlin told the manager at Walla Walla that John Work "should have" 130 horses for his next expedition. If all of them could not be obtained at Nez Percés, the "Big Doctor" added, the chief trader at Fort Colvile was to assist with as many as he could collect.

Some of the horses for the Southern parties were obtained from the same source. Sometimes these animals were driven down along the north bank of the Columbia to Fort Vancouver. On other occasions they were taken across the Cascades into the Willamette Valley. Additional mounts, if still needed, were occasionally purchased
from the freemen and Indians of the Willamette Valley. Chief
Trader McLeod, for instance, bought ten horses and two colts from
"Lucier the Freeman" near Champoeg on May 16, 1826, before starting
for the mouth of the Umpqua. 738

Unfortunately for the prosperity of the expeditions, the horses
finally assembled at the starting points were almost always poor in
quality. Those from the previous journeys seldom had time to fill
out their emaciated bodies, cure their saddle sores, or repair their
worn hoofs. The fresh animals received from the Indians were little
better. Party leaders nearly every year complained bitterly about
the "low state" of the animals traded from the Nez Percés. The
Indians, said Samuel Black at Walla Walla in 1829, did not "improve
in breaking in horses or riding them." 739 Also, the Nez Percés
were clever horse traders and always managed to unload a number
of culls and untamed mustangs on the British. 740 "Three fourths of
the horses I received last fall from Mr Black," wrote Ogden in 1827,
"were young, two years old and ill suited to undergo the severe
privations they met with in the Snake Country." 741

Ogden was inclined to put much of the blame on the Company.
"It would be far more to the interest of the concern," he once said,
"to pay an increase[d] price to the natives and select good horses."
He pointed out that the Americans he met in the Snake Country bought
their animals from the "Upper Nez Percy tribe" where good horses
could be obtained, though the cost was probably double what the
British paid. The American animals, he said, "will in due season
fully pay their value, whereas those we obtain never can.” He meant that greater mobility would result in more beaver being taken. There was much truth in Ogden’s argument, but the difficulty in purchasing adequate horses did not lie entirely in the price paid.

Such provisions and supplies as could not be provided by the inland posts were made available by the depot at Fort Vancouver. These included an assortment of trade goods -- awls, beads, hawk bells, blankets, files, ammunition, copper kettles, scalping knives, thimbles, tobacco, and wire to name only a few -- since furs were traded from the Indians, from American trappers, and from the inhabitants of California whenever an opportunity arose. A supply of stationary -- bound notebooks, paper, ink powder, lead pencils, quills, and sealing wax -- was carried along for the required journals, accounts, and correspondence. Provisions, both for the bourgeois and the men, included such items as brandy, corn, corn meal, flour, molasses, split peas, round peas, Carolina rice, rum, salt, and tallow.

Under the heading of “Country made Articles” were axes, bags, biscuit, oil cloth, cold chisels, tin cups, knives, shot molds, shirts, beaver traps, and trap parts. “Country Produce” included such items as appechemons, oak kegs, dressed deer skins, kegs of butter, and, occasionally, a tent. Another classification covered “Sundries supplied Freemen & Trappers” not included in general shop sales. This heading covered a large range of items, with emphasis on awls, cloth of various types, point blankets, buttons, files,
gunflints, gunpowder, gunworms, handkerchiefs, hats, kettles, knives, needles, pepper, pins, ribbons, shirts, shot, thimbles, thread, tobacco, twine, and wire. Provisions, including rum, and "Country made Articles" were also listed under articles sold to freemen.

In addition, there is known to have been certain equipment which does not appear in any financial accounts thus far examined in the preparation of this study. In September, 1826 for example, A. R. McLeod mentioned having a "hand vice." Several of the Snake expeditions carried along a three-pound cannon.

John Dunn, who served briefly as a postmaster at Fort Vancouver, has left a picturesque description of the bustle about the depot as a trapping party was being prepared for its journey:

The blacksmiths are busily engaged making beaver-traps . . . -- the storekeepers making up articles for trade, and equipping the men (as each of them takes from the store every requisite article), the clerk in charge of the provision-store (generally called, after the French, demence), packing up provisions for them, to last until they set into the hunting ground -- the clerk in charge of the farm providing horses, and other requisite articles.

Except for the items purchased by individuals, all of these supplies appear to have left Vancouver "in bulk," not to be distributed further until the jump-off points in the frontier were reached. Ordinarily transportation of both goods and persons bound for the Snake Country was by Columbia boats as far as Fort Nez Percés, The Dalles, or other place where the expedition was to be finally organized.

Similarly, the outfit and the personnel of the Southern Party were usually carried by boat to Willamette Falls, portaged over the
"chutes," and taken by boat or canoe to the Champoeg-Newberg area. But on occasion, when there were a number of horses to be taken from Fort Vancouver to the assembly point, a portion of the people drove the animals downstream from the depot for a few miles and then swam them across the river to Sauvie Island and the Scappoose vicinity, from whence a trail led south through the Tualatin Plains to near the mouth of Chehalem Creek not far from Champoeg.

Not all expeditions to the south took their final departure from Champoeg, however. John Work, on his way to the Umpqua in 1834, for instance, distributed horses to his party at the Tualatin Plains. But veteran Company clerk George B. Roberts was undoubtedly correct, in general, when he recalled in later years that Champoeg was "the starting point for California." But veteran Company clerk George B. Roberts was undoubtedly correct, in general, when he recalled in later years that Champoeg was "the starting point for California."  748

A most important feature of the departure of a trapping party from Fort Vancouver was the regale or régale -- an issue of spirits and food given as a "treat" to the men about to embark on another journey of hardship and privation. For the Snake Party this affair was habitually held a few miles upstream from the fort in the vicinity of the Company's mills, well isolated from the depot employees. The régales for the departing Southern expeditions usually took place near Champoeg.

Peter Skene Ogden and perhaps other leaders were able to keep their men somewhat under control on these occasions, and as a result little delay in starting was experienced. Perhaps the reason for
this moderation on the part of the trappers, at least during the early years of the Company's tenure on the Pacific Slope, was the fact that, as Ogden remarked, "even at headquarters the regale they receive is so trifling that it is scarcely worth accepting."749

But not all leaders were so fortunate. Chief Trader McLeod gave his men a regale at Champoeg on Monday evening, September 8, 1828, before setting out for the Umpqua. On Wednesday he noted that many of the party were still unable to work due to the effects of liquor, but by Thursday, though the people were still "enjoying themselves," he was relieved to find that most of the drink had been consumed.750 The costs of the regale at departure and of another on arrival back at the base or depot were carefully toted up and charged against the expenses of the expedition.751

When the jump-off points were reached the final organization of the parties began. Often additional men, both engagés (salaried Company employees) and freemen (free-lance trappers), were enlisted; ill or superannuated hands were left behind. If necessary, additional horses were acquired. Provisions, ammunition, and horses were distributed among the men. The agrés were carefully checked and handed out to those entitled to them. Any items in bad repair were put to rights, and those lacking were obtained or manufactured on the spot.

It was at this stage that the terms of employment and the difference between servants and freemen became even more important than at the depot. These terms determined who got what during the distribution and on what conditions and at what price. The financial
arrangements varied somewhat over the years, and the following discussion therefore is necessarily somewhat generalized.

The Company's regular employees, the so-called "servants" or engagés, received an annual salary. The rolls of the expeditions reveal that most of the servants in the various parties were ranked as "middlemen," the ordinary paddlers of a canoe or oarsmen of a boat; their pay was £17 per year. "Laborers" also appear on expedition rolls; they were often Hawaiians, and their wages too were £17 as a rule, though sometimes if the laborers were young half-breeds or Indians the pay was less. Occasionally a "boute" went along with a trapping party; these men were the bowsmen or steersmen on canoes or boats, and their usual wage was £22 per annum.752

It was common knowledge that serving in trapping expeditions, particularly those to the Snake Country, was the most dangerous and disagreeable work in the Columbia. In order to induce employees to accept this duty, certain concessions in remuneration were made. In 1827 McLoughlin said that the servants in Orden's Snake Party were given the "same terms as last year," that is their regular wages of £17 per annum for ordinary laborers and voyageurs. In addition, the proceeds of the hunt were divided in three portions: first the expenses of the expedition, charged at inventory prices, were to be repaid to the Company in beaver at the rate of four shillings per skin; then one half of the remainder went to the concern as profit; and the other half was credited to the servants at the rate of four shillings per made beaver.753
By 1838, however, the lot of the engagees appears to have improved somewhat. James Douglas explained the situation to Charles Ross as follows: "The half Trappers receive wages as if employed in a fort, besides the value of half their hunt, expenses deducted . . . a large Beaver is paid 11/ a small do 5/6 & a large land otter 10/ a small one 5/." These were the same prices as those paid to freemen. In addition, servants were able to purchase clothing and other supplies at a considerable discount from prices charged outsiders.

Freemen, who sometimes made up the larger part of trapping parties, were remunerated on a different basis. They received no wage or other payment "save their hunts." As has been seen, in 1826 as part of his move to alleviate the lot of the trappers, McLoughlin agreed to pay ten shillings for each large beaver and five shillings for every "cub" turned in by the freemen. By 1838 these amounts had been altered to eleven shillings for a large beaver, 5 shillings six pence for each small one, ten shillings for a large land otter, and five shillings for a small otter. In 1826 McLoughlin also permitted the freemen to buy their "Hunting Implements" at inventory prices and "personal necessaries" up to the amount of £10 or £15 at prices paid by servants -- fifty per cent above prime cost for imported goods.

Ogden came to believe that the prices charged to freemen were still too high and that the limit placed on discount purchases was unrealistic. Late in 1827 he stated that a freeman "from the laborious life he leads I am now of opinion he cannot do with less than £25,
and on his return to the Depot even with the above advances he will reach that place naked."756 This suggestion was not favorably received, and by 1831 the freemen may even have lost ground a bit, since McDonaldlin seems to have indicated that both hunting implements and personal items were being charged to them at servants' prices.757

Freemen, in 1828 at least, were charged $2 for each horse they bought from the Company. These and practically all other purchases for that matter were advanced on credit. Horses were returned when a man "gave over" hunting, and the only final charge was for animals lost, including those that died from hardship or were stolen by Indians. Similarly, "hunting implements" could be returned for full credit, less the cost of repairing those broken. Lost items were charged to the loser.758 What this meant in essence was that horses and traps were supplied by the Company with "all losses" to be "defrayed by the Trappers."759

Each trapper carried, on an average, seven traps.760 In 1824 Alexander Ross said the men in his Snake Party each had from six to ten steel traps.761 A freeman was charged -- in 1826 at least -- fifteen shillings for each trap; they were issued free to engagés. In either case, however, the traps had to be paid for if lost or damaged. If traps or their chains were broken during service, the trappers had to pay the cost of repairs in the field which, said Ogden, was nearly as much as the original cost. The men were willing to pay these steep charges rather than forego the use of their traps for the season. Traps were often lost in service, usually by the breaking of the chains, by being stolen by Indians or on rare occasions
by fellow trappers, through carelessness, or through having to be abandoned during Indian attacks.

Under these circumstances the quality of the traps was a matter of much concern both to the individual hunter and to the Company's officers. During the early years of the firm's operations on the Columbia there were frequent complaints that the traps and their all-important chains were faulty and broke easily. Ogden investigated this matter when he was at Fort Vancouver during the summer of 1826. He was satisfied that the difficulty did not lie with the depot blacksmith, who said the trouble was caused by the iron, which was "bad and not the proper kind that is required for Trapping." Chief Factor McLoughlin took steps to remedy the situation, but improvement was long in coming.

It is not surprising, then, that the British trappers much preferred American traps, which were originally sold "warranted good and generally prove to be so." Ogden said in 1827 that the American traps were "far more slender in make than our Traps but undoubtedly made of far superior materials." There usually were a few American traps with the Snake expeditions, and they were found to give long service.

There were a number of other charges which had to be borne by trappers in the field. For example, if the men individually hired Indians to guide them to places where beaver might be found, the trappers who benefitted had to pay the natives for their services.

Among the items distributed at the jump-off points were provisions. When stationed at the Company's posts or when traveling as
boatmen employees received rations at no cost, but when off on trapping expeditions both servants and freemen originally were expected to feed themselves. It was soon found, however, that there were sometimes long periods when the hunters and trappers could not find enough game to supply the people. This was particularly true on the Snake expeditions when, in addition to many barren areas, the routes to and from the trapping grounds had been quite thoroughly cleared of edible animals.

By at least 1826, therefore, substantial amounts of provisions were carried with the brigade. That year, for example, the packs of the brigade horses carried 300 pounds of flour, 21 bushels of corn and corn meal, 16 bushels of dried peas, 50 pounds of rice, and 120 pounds of tallow, in addition to brandy, rum, molasses, and salt.766

In 1832 John Work noted in his journal that he was occupied nearly a whole day at Fort Nez Percés in "delivering the people their provisions" before starting for the Snake Country.767 It is not clear, however, whether this was Company food being distributed to servants for transport or whether these provisions were being sold to the men for themselves and their families. The journals are largely silent on such matters, but from occasional remarks it would appear that the leader kept a stock of provisions under his own control and gave them out during times of need if they were still available. Chief Trader McLoughlin, about to start southward from the Willamette Valley in 1826, noted: "their daily rations are issued to them [the servants?] consisting of Oatmeal and a piece of Venison when we can afford it."768
It seems clear, however, that these rations were primarily for servants and not for freemen. In October, 1826, when Ogden's party was traveling down Silvies River, the men for several days had not caught enough beaver to satisfy their hunger. At one point Ogden noted in his journal: "Freeman [sic] starving and had we not Corn we would be in the same predicament." But as more days passed with no success at hunting, Ogden relented and distributed some of his provisions to the freemen. When still more time went by with scarcely any beaver being caught, the hungry freemen came to the bourgeois and asked if they would be helped. The leader replied that they would be, "as I already had assist[ed] them in provisions as long as my stock lasted. and with this they appeared contented."769

Freemen were charged for all provisions received. The case with servants is not so clear, but evidently they had to pay also. In 1830 Peter Skene Ogden told John Work: "The Engaged Men are not entitled to any Rations from their starting from this [place] [Fort Nez Percés] to their Return and are obliged to supply you with food when in their power."770 Engagés certainly had to pay for provisions for their families.

On the trail, if a Company horse died or was killed for food, its flesh was sold, not distributed gratis. During the summer of 1827 when Ogden's party was crossing the desert area northeast of Goose Lake, two "fine mares" belonging to the firm died from poisonous water or plants. "The meat however has not been lost," said Ogden, "for it has been purchased by the men for food."771
Both at the organizational camp and in the field the leader passed out ammunition to hunters to kill game. The resulting kills evidently were considered Company property at least in part, to be disposed of as were other provisions. But seemingly persons killing animals and bringing the meat into camp had an opportunity to gain credit by putting the flesh at the disposal of the Company. In 1826 A. R. McLeod noted, "of the animals lately killed three was left at the disposal of the hunters, the remainder taken for our mess and put to the Credit of P. Charles who killed them." Possibly for this reason the bourreoeis was usually careful to record in his journal how many animals and waterfowl were killed and who killed them.

The leader, if he was a chief trader or a clerk, was fed at the Company's expense, and he carried along a stock of food and condiments for his personal use. But generally his stores ran out long before the expedition ended, partly because humanity induced him to assist the ill and starving in times of privation. Postmasters and interpreters generally received an augmentation of their rations with a very few luxuries such as sugar and molasses. But all members of the party lived off the country as far as possible when beaver and game were available.

Every person on the expedition from the highest officer to the lowest laborer provided his own personal effects, which he had to buy from the Company, make himself, or acquire by trade. Under this classification came such important items as clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, needles and thread, and others. The situation
as regards guns and ammunition is not so clear. Guns may have been considered "hunting implements" and sold on the same terms as traps. Evidently freemen had to buy their ammunition, but it may have been issued to employees. On rare occasions the leader brought along a cloth tent, but usually he lived in a "lodge" or "hut" like everyone else. In 1832 at Fort Nez Percés John Work "delivered the people horse après, leather lodges, &c." It is not clear whether the lodges remained Company property or were issued on credit. Much research remains to be done on the subject of equipping trapping parties.

Among the most important pieces of equipment for any trapping brigade were guns. The men of a British beaver-hunting party carried both rifles and "guns," that is smoothbore muskets. Rifles were introduced on a major scale to the Columbia region by the Astorians, though at least some of the Nor'Westers used them also. But on the whole the British, even early Hudson's Bay men, seem to have commonly employed the musket.

Peter Skene Ogden, for one, much preferred to have his party armed with smoothbore guns. Although rifles could bring down game at a considerable distance, Ogden believed they caused a waste of ammunition, first because they were easily "deranged" and required the firing of at least twenty shots before they were pronounced in order and, second, because the vain marksmen on the Columbia failed to make allowance for distance and other factors influencing the trajectory of the bullet. He maintained that for every rifle shot
that killed, nine were wasted. With a musket on the other hand, a hunter usually had to be within twenty yards of his quarry and thus usually made a kill with six shots out of ten.775

But by the 1830s journals appear to indicate that rifles were frequently carried.776 It is sometimes stated that one of the principal differences between a British brigade and an American one was that the men of the latter were armed with rifles while the people of the former used muskets. While there is some truth to this observation, the extent of the difference has been exaggerated, particularly for the later years. When in the field at least some of the Hudson's Bay trappers protected their rifles, and presumably their muskets also, with covers.777

The camps at the jumping-off points were busy, confusing, and picturesque. As the leather lodges -- the conical tepees adopted from the Indians of the Great Plains and usually made from buffalo hide -- were distributed they were erected if enough poles were available, but the usual practice was to cut the required ten long supports at an early stop on the trail.778 The Grande Ronde was a favorite location for this purpose. Otherwise the people made do with makeshift brush and leather shelters.779 The men were divided into messes -- four men and their families to each.780 Presumably the people in each mess shared a common fire and pooled their culinary skills and resources in the preparation of meals. This organization was maintained throughout the march.

The people who made up the brigade were a diverse lot. Surviving rolls of members show that the overwhelming majority was composed of
French-Canadians. There was usually a scattering of men with English surnames, some of whom were Americans who threw in their lot with the Company because the British paid more for furs and sold goods at lower prices than most of the American traders, particularly during the latter part of the 1830s and during the early 1840s.

On some expeditions Hawaiians were well represented, though their numbers declined as certain leaders came to believe these sturdy people unsuited for the trapper's life. On the earliest Snake expeditions there was a relatively high proportion of Eastern Indians, mostly Iroquois and Nipissings, but after many of them deserted from Ogden in 1825 they fell into disfavor, and only a few appear on the rosters of later brigades.

In addition, almost every expedition was accompanied by a number of male local Indians. Sometimes the proportion was relatively low. Work's 1832-1833 party, for instance, had only six Indians to twenty-eight "men" (Europeans, Hawaiians, and Eastern Indians). But Michel Laframboise's party which met Work in California contained seventeen male Indians to eighteen "men."

Some of these natives came along as volunteers, but many of them probably were slaves. The greater part of these unfortunates were the property of the native wives of the trappers, but before 1838 -- when the Company took strong steps to end the practice among its own employees -- it is possible that a few of the slaves belonged to officers, engagés, and freemen. On his 1829-1830 expedition, for example, Peter Skene Ogden's cook was a slave, although the bourgeois...
did not specifically state that the servant was owned by him.\textsuperscript{784}

The slaves were highly useful on a trapping expedition. They relieved their owners of much of the drudgery of camp life. They gathered the firewood, cleaned and processed the furs, packed the horses, and performed innumerable other tasks. Furser William A. Slacum, a United States naval officer who visited the Pacific Northwest in 1836-1837, falsely accused the Company of encouraging slavery and claimed that the use of slaves on trapping expeditions made for unfair competition with American rivals. He told the Congress that these captive workers saved the firm "the expense of employing at least double the number of men that would otherwise be required on these excursions."\textsuperscript{785}

This claim was certainly a great exaggeration. Most leaders found these local Indians to be of only minor utility as far as the Company's interests were concerned. On the trail they were often considered fit merely to keep up the base camp while the trappers were scattered off to the beaver streams and to tend the horses in situations of relative safety from Indian attacks.\textsuperscript{786} Occasionally, however, one of the local natives would be highly commended by the leader for bravery or useful service. But on the whole, the benefits derived from their presence were felt mostly by their individual owners.

Almost every trapping brigade was accompanied by the wives and children of the "men." Since the Company did not officially recognize the presence of these dependents their existence was not always
mentioned in the statements of the number of people in the party. They were never listed by name. Generally their presence is known only through incidental mention in the journals -- through notations that a wife or child was ill or had died, that a halt was made to allow a woman to give birth to an infant, and the like. But such numbers as were given provide ample proof that women and children made up a substantial part of nearly every caravan. John Work's 1832-1833 brigade, for instance, consisted of twenty-eight men, twenty-two women, forty-four children, and six Indians.

The wives of the men were largely Pacific Slope Indians, although some of the men had brought native mates with them from east of the mountains. The consorts of the officers and clerks were quite often the offspring of European men and Indian women, although some of the "servants" had mixed-blood wives also. All of the Indian consorts and most of the half-breeds had been raised in the native cultures of their mothers and thus were well versed in the techniques of camp life and fully prepared to accept the hardships of the trail as the natural condition of existence.

The families were no mere useless appendages to the brigade. When slaves were not available they cooked the meals, tended the fires, and made the clothing of their men. They could put up lodges much more quickly than any European male. As shall be seen in some detail, they generally skinned the beaver and dressed the pelts of the animals taken by their husbands. They dried meat for provisions and tanned deer, elk, and buffalo hides for a multitude of
purposes. What Slacum said about slaves may not have been entirely true, but it is certain that the Company saved a good deal of money by permitting the families to accompany the expeditions. Organized American trapping parties sometimes hired special camp tenders to perform the tasks that the wives of the British performed merely to help their mates.

The value of the women was amply demonstrated at the jump-off camp. There was always a lot of gear to repair or manufacture, and both men and women were set to completing these last-minute chores. At his camp in the Willamette Valley in May, 1826, Chief Trader McLeod noted that while the men were "employed arranging saddles for carrying the property" and "covering the Saddles made before our departure," the women were "sewing horse bags." Later the men were also out to making saddle bags from some parchment red deer skins that had been acquired."789

Before the party got under way, the leader sometimes called the men together and announced the rules and regulations under which the expedition would be conducted. At Flathead Post on the eve of his departure for the Snake Country early in 1824, Alexander Ross pointed out to his people the hardships and dangers which lay ahead and offered anyone who wished a chance to withdraw. All avowed their intention to go, so Ross emphasized the necessity of remaining alert and guarding the horses, "on which the success of the undertaking depended." He announced that a night watch would be established and rigidly enforced "upon every one in turn."790
At other times the rules were announced en route when the region of maximum danger was about to be entered. In September, 1827, Ogden found himself with only seventeen men in the heart of the Snake Indian country at the mouth of Weiser River. "I assembled the whole party," he wrote in his journal, "and represented to them as our numbers are few and danger to be apprehended, that no one should sleep from camp, and this night we commence night guard on our horses and camp." 791

Three years later, when coaching John Work on how to conduct a Snake expedition, Ogden outlined his usual "rules and regulations" in more detail: "No Man exempted from going on discovery or to any place required for the general Interest -- No Man exempted from night watch excepting the day Guard. No one is allowed to start before the Leader is ready and gives the calls the same in regard to Encamping, when 2/3 of the Trappers have their traps in the water it is understood you remain in Camp." 792

As numerous journal entries over the years amply demonstrate, such admonitions and rule-making did not always produce the desired results. Instances of neglect of duty, carelessness, and outright disobedience were fairly common. Yet evidently the British trappers were better disciplined than most of their American counterparts.

In 1834 Philadelphia naturalist John Kirk Townsend met Thomas McKay's Snake Party at Fort Hall on Snake River. "I admire the order, decorum, and strict subordination which exists among his men, so different from what I have been accustomed to see in parties composed of Americans," he commented. 793
Getting a trapping brigade off from its base at the start of an expedition always presented a confusing but picturesque scene. Many of the horses were new stock, freshly obtained from the Indians or, later, from the nearly wild herds on the Company's grazing farms. Thus the horses and mules distributed to the men were frequently unbroken or at least not used to pack saddles and heavy burdens. In 1826 Ogden reported that when the animals for his third expedition were packed for the trail their loads were soon "scattered in all directions and a Keg containing 16 lbs. Tallow was lost and if this should be the only loss we shall sustain by them we may consider ourselves fortunate."794

But at last the animals were subdued. The horses that had strayed were rounded up, and those "borrowed" by local Indians were recovered. The party could be on its way.

A fur brigade on the trail was a colorful sight. Sometimes before leaving the depot or other base post and more often upon returning from the field, the trappers and their families dressed themselves in clean clothes, put bright ribbons and feathers in their hats, and otherwise did honor to the festive occasion. A resident at the Methodist mission in the Willamette Valley described the Southern Party as it passed on its way to Fort Vancouver:

This company, just before entering the settlement, which was early in the morning, stopped to remove from their persons stains and traces of travel and to dress themselves carefully in their best attire. They then formed themselves in Indian file, led by Mr. La Framboy, the chief of the party. Next [to] him rode his wife, a native woman, astride — as is common with the females — upon her pony, quite picturesque-clad. She wore a man's hat with long black feathers fastened in front and drooping behind her very gracefully. Her short dress was of rich broadcloth, leggings beautifully embroidered with gay beads and fringed with tiny bells, whose
musical tinkling could be heard at several hundred yards distance. Next, the Clerk and his wife, much in the same manner, and so on to the officers of less importance and the men, and finally the boys driving the packhorses, with bales of furs, one hundred and eighty pounds to each animal. The trampling of the fast-walking horses, the silvery tinkling of the small bells, rich, handsome dresses, and fine appearance of the riders, whose numbers amounted to sixty or seventy. The array was really patriarchal and had quite an imposing appearance.\textsuperscript{795}

Lest the picture be painted too bright, however, this description should be contrasted with what a Catholic priest said concerning the Southern Expedition of 1839. "The brigade," he wrote, "is a hideous assemblage of persons of both sexes, devoid of principles and morals" and possessed of "revolting exteriors."\textsuperscript{796}

A missionary who traveled for a while with Tom McKay's Snake Party of 1834 left a more balanced description of a Company brigade in the field:

Our new party consisted of Mr. M'Kay, his Canadians, with their bows and arrows, wives, mounted in the fashionable native style, astride, and bearing muskets, and their children confined to a board, and hung on the horn of their saddles, or lashed on horseback alone, and some Indians with their squaws and children, in the same order.\textsuperscript{797}

If the memory of a woman who as a very young child traveled in the Southern Party with her trapper father, Louis Aucent [or Osant], and her native mother was accurate, the journey to California was somewhat of a lark for the youngsters. She remembered how delighted she and her playmates, a daughter of Laframboise, were as they "passed under the expansive oaks of the Sacramento Valley to hear the dry leaves rustle under their horse' hoofs."\textsuperscript{798}

Historians have sometimes assumed that Company trappers were universally "clad in buckskin."\textsuperscript{799} Such was not the case, at least
during the early months of an expedition. In 1866 American trapper Joseph L. Meek was asked: "What badge did the Indian recognize as indicating a Hudson's Bay man?" He replied under oath: "They would tell them by their dress -- Scotch cap and red belt -- and their general appearance, they generally had [cloth] clothes, and we had but very few."800

The lists of "sundries" purchased by the freemen on expeditions include fairly extensive amounts of cloth of several types and limited numbers of capotes (blanket coats, generally with hoods), shirts, trousers, and "Mens Waterproof Beaver Hats."801 Presumably other items of clothing had been bought at the depot sale shop prior to departure. Strangely enough capotes, the almost universal outer winter garment of British traders and voyageurs east of the mountains and in some localities on the Pacific Slope, were seldom mentioned in the Snake or Southern expedition journals. Perhaps it was more convenient for mounted men to use the poncho. As worn by Hudson's Bay employees in the Far West, it consisted of "a blue or red blanket with a slit in the centre to put the head through, so this blanket covered the man, musket, powderhorn and everything else."802

Regardless of the material from which upper articles of clothing were made, however, it is highly probable that buckskin trousers were favored by the trappers. Even at Fort Vancouver "all" the gentlemen wore them, since riding on horseback and carrying a gun were "very destructive to cloth pantaloons."803 And it is likely that some of the hunters wore complete buckskin "suits" from the very
outset of an expedition. As a number of western travelers discovered, no other kind of apparel was "so well suited . . . to the life of an Indian or trapper." 804

Since the brigades were in the field for many months at a time, cloth clothing eventually wore out and was often replaced by articles made of deerskin. Expert Indian women, in a pinch and despite the rather complicated tanning process, could produce a leather suit within twenty-four hours after the skin had been taken from the animal. 805

Once the expedition was on the trail the leader's most difficult work began. The conductor of a trapping brigade had no sinecure. His principal duty was to conduct his party to regions where beaver were plentiful so that the trappers could make a successful hunt. In the final analysis, his qualities as a leader would be judged by the amount of returns he brought back to the depot. Thus he needed to know which streams had been trapped to exhaustion by previous expeditions, both British and American. He had to be able to judge when trapped out streams could be expected to recover. And of course he was required to know where yet-untouched beaver grounds might be expected.

Another major responsibility was keeping his party in food. Even after Ogden had demonstrated that carrying provisions from the base was a necessity, the old practice of living off the land so heartily supported by thrifty Governor Simpson prevailed during the greater part of every journey. Thus the leader had to route his
expedition through regions where food -- beaver or other game -- could be found in quantities sufficient to prevent the slaughter of the horses to fill the cooking pots.

At least once on every long trip this search for food required a stay of several weeks or even months in a region where large game -- buffalo in the Snake Country, elk in California -- could be expected in quantity. Generally this pause took place during the winter when beaver hunting was difficult due to ice and snow in the Snake Country and to flooding in the Central Valley. The meat of the larger animals was required not only for an immediate food supply but as a stock of provisions for further travel, particularly for the homeward journey through areas denuded of game. The meat for this latter purpose was preserved by being dried over fires.

Many of the trappers were improvident, and year after year they would fail to put up enough provisions to see them through the hard times ahead. It was to the bourgeois's interest to encourage his men and their families to forego the immediate pleasure of eating all the meat immediately and to dry as much as possible.

The hides of the buffalo, elk, and deer killed in the search for meat were also important for the well-being of the expedition. The skins were tanned, mostly by the women, and utilized for a variety of purposes. Pack cords were always in demand. Leather covers were required to protect packs and appachemons while traveling through brush or dense woods.306 Skin wrappers shielded packs of furs. It was the leader's responsibility to see that adequate supplies of leather were obtained.
If all else failed, food in the form of roots, fish, nuts and seeds, game, or horses had to be obtained from the Indians. Often the natives were reluctant to trade away their provisions, since they were generally short of supplies themselves. In the Snake Country the Indians encountered by the trappers were sometimes on the verge of starvation. All of the conductor’s powers of persuasion and diplomacy were occasionally required to obtain even a few roots. And sometimes, particularly with the Snakes, it was necessary to surprise the natives and take the food “here they have time to secure it.” Ogden once said that “by any other means you cannot obtain anything from them... particularly Provisions,” but he added, “not do I blame them as their resources are not great in such a wretched Country.”

Much of a leader’s time was spent “buttering up” disgruntled employees and freemen so they would not desert or shirk their duties. The members of a trapping brigade, particularly the freemen, were an independent lot and once in the wilderness they tended to regard their obligations and indebtedness to the Company very lightly. Alexander Ross felt that the Iroquois were the most troublesome. In his opinion they were “improvident and thoughtless beings” who would trade away even their guns to the Indians for horses. But many of the French-Canadians and mixed bloods were considered little better. They had an insatiable love for the hunt, especially the buffalo chase, and they would waste precious ammunition with reckless abandon in excessive slaughter. They often neglected their work to race horses or to slip away to trade horses with the
natives, a serious matter when they bartered with their powder and ball. Even in Blackfoot country they frequently showed a singular disregard for their own safety or that of the brigade. In particular, they were reluctant to stand night guard over the horses, even their own. When beaver were scarce or hardships piled up they tended to complain and occasionally become mutinous, hatching plots and wishing to break away from the main party.

With some reason Alexander Ross said of his men: "A more discordant headstrong, ill-designing set of rascals than form this camp, God never permitted together in the fur trade." Governor Simpson was even more forceful when he described the "Snake Country Expedition" to the London directors in 1824: "This band of Freemen the very scum of the country and generally outcasts from the Service for misconduct are the most unruly and troublesome gang to deal with in this or perhaps any other part of the World, are under no control & feel their own independence they therefore require very superior management to make anything of them."

Except for such rare occurrences as the mass desertion of Ogden's men in 1825, the Company's officers generally managed by persuasion, promises, or threats to keep their parties together. But sometimes more positive measures were necessary. In April, 1826, while on Snake River, Ogden received word that three "half Breeds" in his camp were about to desert to join a nearby party of Flatheads. He promptly confiscated the men's horses, traps, arms, and blankets, but despite being thus severely handicapped they managed to slip
away. Soon tired of walking, however, they decided to rejoin the brigade. "One of them for his impudence," noted Ogden, "received a drubbing from me." 311

In addition to such occasional major threats to the expedition as desertions and possible mutinies, there were minor acts of insubordination that could not be permitted to remain unnoticed. Here again, persuasion and reprimands were usually sufficient to remedy the situation. And at rare intervals the leader considered it the better part of wisdom to let insubordinate or incompetent people leave the brigade to join the Americans or the Indians. But at times it was necessary to be firm. In September, 1832, when Work's party was only a few days out from Walla Walla, one of the men "refused to go and seek after the stray horses tho' three of them were his own."

"I was obliged," wrote Work, "to knock him down & give him a beating." 312

It was well to establish who was boss early in the trip. Certainly all conductors of parties could agree with McLaughlin when he said, "Freemen in the plains with their families starving about them are not easily led." 313

The ability to deal effectively with Indians was another requisite for the leader of a trapping brigade. From the standpoint of the Company, the most important aspect of treating with natives was inducing them to trade their furs before the skins could fall into the hands of the Americans. But sometimes the leaders in the field were even more anxious to obtain food or horses in times of emergency.
The real test came, however, when the party was faced by overwhelming numbers of natives who displayed signs of hostility. Here again, diplomacy, coupled with the distribution of presents, was sometimes enough to turn away wrath. At other times the natives were permitted to observe the camp in a highly armed state of readiness. But if arrows were shot into the camp or at the horses, the British leaders did not hesitate to return the shots with rifle fire. On occasion, as with McDonald in 1823 and Ogden in 1829-1830, it was felt necessary to give the attackers severe lessons and to kill substantial numbers of them.

Almost everywhere the trapping expeditions went in the Snake Country, in Oregon, and in California they were plagued by Indian horse thieves. The Blackfeet were particularly troublesome, and small bands of them would sometimes dog a brigade for days hoping spirit away a few animals from the grazing herd. Some of the natives were so skillful at this trade -- for it was a business with many of them -- that they could steal horses from under the very noses of the guards without being detected. Any Indians discovered in the act of taking animals were immediately fired upon, but in the dark of night they were seldom hit.

When losses to Indian horse thieves were discovered, the leaders almost always sent men in pursuit if the expedition's remaining animals were not too weak. Indians overtaken in such chases were often shot. If trappers managed to surprise small bands of Blackfeet they usually massacred them in retaliation for past wrongs and as a deterrent to others in the future.
But on some occasions, when the stolen animals were discovered after an interval in the hands of natives, the conductors decided that a soft approach would pay better dividends in the long run. In such cases the Indians often claimed that they had only purchased the horses innocently from the actual thieves, and the brigade leaders found it impossible to determine the truth. Thus on June 2, 1826, when Ogden noticed two of his horses in a band belonging to a "notoriously bad Indian," he retrieved them "but not without giving a trifle to the Indian." A few days later he relieved a native of two mules stolen from a member of his party, but once more "a present was offered." 814

At no time was the skill of the bourgeoisie in dealing with Indians more tested than when it came to obtaining the almost indispensable native guides. Such assistance was usually considered essential for traversing unknown territory. For example, when Peter Skene Ogden joined Finan McDonald's Umpqua party on the Deschutes River in December, 1825, he was highly disappointed to find that McDonald had not obtained guides for the projected journey eastward to Snake River. "I must now endeavour to find an Indian who knows the Country if we do not succeed in procuring one we must make the attempt without, and this will cause us great loss of time," he remarked in his journal. After two days of further searching he gave a present to a Nez Percé in his party "for past services also a bait to induce an Indian to accompany us as a Guide." Perhaps this gesture was exactly what was required, for a native who seemed qualified was promptly enlisted, and the journey continued. 815
But once obtained, guides frequently proved unreliable. Some claimed to be well acquainted with the region but proved not to be. Desertion of guides was not infrequent, particularly after they led a party into difficult terrain or to streams with no beaver. A common fault of guides was to promise that they knew of country, always farther ahead, where beaver abounded. But the promised riches frequently did not materialize. The conquistadores of New Spain would have comprehended the situation perfectly, but it took Ogden a while to learn. By the time he returned from his second Snake expedition he was wary of any glowing reports received from Indians.816

Although guides were necessary and even though they were sometimes excellent and of much assistance, the conductors of brigades generally found their use to be frustrating. "The anxiety and trouble Indian Guides give us is known only to those who are at their mercy," an exasperated Ogden once wrote.817

Another responsibility of the bourgeois was keeping the required daily journal of the expedition. This record served not only to keep superior officers and the directors informed of conditions in the trapping areas but it permitted them to judge the quality of the leadership. It also provided invaluable data upon which to plan future expeditions. In 1824 Alexander Ross told Ogden, his successor as head of the Snake Brigade: "It is indeed shameful that no Correct Journal of the Snake Country has ever yet appeared to point out where Beaver are and where beaver are not." As a consequence, he added, "Much time is lost Wandering through these parts."818
The financial records of an expedition apparently were quite extensive. Goods and provisions sold were charged against the men's accounts; furs and game received were credited. Losses of horses, traps and other issued items were recorded. Overhead expenditures, such as gifts to guides and other Indians, had to be accounted for. When no clerk accompanied the brigade, as was generally the case, these bookkeeping chores fell upon the conductor.

The leader served as the doctor for the brigade. Illness, accidents, and wounds inflicted by Indians or by fellow trappers were among the ever-present hazards of the trail. A small stock of medicines was carried along on each trip, but if there were many cases of sickness such as occurred on Work's 1832-1833 journey to California, these supplies were soon exhausted.

The bourgeois were not trained doctors by any means. Many cases were far beyond their capabilities to treat. During 1826, for example, two of Ogden's men were severely wounded by Indian arrows. Both recovered, but they had to carry the arrowheads in their bodies until they returned from the expedition, because no one in the party felt qualified to remove them.219

But the leaders usually did the best they could when faced with medical emergencies. They administered purges and vomits, concocted doses of gunpowder and vinegar when other remedies were not available, and even bled their patients. When a number of his men became incapacitated from eating the meat of beaver that had fed on wild hemlock, Ogden "made a guinea pig of himself." He deliberately downed some of the tainted flesh, evidently in an effort to determine
if any discernable characteristics distinguished the bad meat from
the good. "I never suffered more for three hours," he wrote after
the poison finally took effect; "the pain was great and it left me
so weak I could scarcely crawl."820

At times, however, when medicines were exhausted or for other
reasons, the ill or injured had to get on as best they could on their
own or with the assistance of family or friends. If a man dropped
behind from some disability or if he was injured while separated
from the party, every effort was made to bring him into camp and to
get him on his feet again. Instances in which the entire party
halted for several days to enable a sick person to recover or to
permit a woman to give birth to a child were fairly common. If a
person could be moved but was too disabled to ride unassisted, he
was sometimes tied on the saddle. In a few extreme cases patients
were carried on litters.

On the other hand, even severe illnesses or wounds were some-
times treated rather cavalierly -- even callously. In 1826 a
freeman in Ogden's party lost a forefinger and part of a thumb
when his gun burst. Ogden merely noted that the man "appears" to
suffer great pain and [it] will be some time ere he recovers."821
As Ogden wrote in 1827, "a sick person on a journey of this kind is
not only a burden to himself but still more so to all and the
Canadians . . . are not over stocked with tender feelings."822

An example of this apparent heartlessness, born of the neces-
sity for maximizing returns, occurred during July, 1826. Indians
reported that one of Ogden's Hawaiian trappers was "very sick" at
some distance from camp. "If so," wrote the leader in his journal, "he is requested to come here, that his traps may not remain useless. They will be parcel'd among the other men, should he be unable to employ them to advantage."823

A person who was disabled so severely that he could not go forward even on a horse presented a great problem. If an expedition was to be a financial success it could not afford to halt for long in one place during the trapping season. Beaver and game would soon be exhausted, and grass for the horses would become scarce. To move on was imperative.

In such cases a variety of expedients was possible. As has been seen, sometimes two or more of the disabled man's friends volunteered to remain behind with him until he recovered or died. In December, 1926, when Ogden was traveling along the shore of Upper Klamath Lake, a woman with the party who had been ill for a considerable period was left in the care of a Klamath chief. This was, said the leader, "with her own consent and by her request." If she recovered she could rejoin the party if it returned by the same route; if it did not she was to find her way to the Willamette Valley.

If a member of the party died or was killed in the field every effort was made to give the person a decent burial. At times, however, danger from Indians made it impossible to recover the bodies of men killed away from camp. And in Indian country the trappers sometimes went to considerable lengths to disguise graves so that they would not be desecrated. A usual practice was to bury the man in camp and then build a fire over the spot.825
along Snake River, a man was buried beneath a beaver dam for this reason.

When possible a modest ceremony marked the interment. In 1834 John Kirk Townsend witnessed the burial of a Canadian belonging to Thomas McKay's Snake Party. Since the death occurred near Fort Hall, the arrangements were more elaborate than would have been the case in the wilderness. The body was "wrapped in a piece of coarse linen, over which was sewed a buffalo robe." A Methodist preacher performed "the ordinary church ceremony," after which a hymn for the repose of the soul of the departed, was sung by the Canadians present." The grave was surrounded by a "neat palisade of willows" and marked by a black cross. Even on the trail, when the grave was concealed, trappers traditionally inscribed a nearby tree with the name, age, and date of death of the deceased.

Because the life of a trapper was so hazardous, men sometimes made their wills before departing on an expedition. In 1829 Alexander Carson addressed the following letter, witnessed by three officers, to Chief Factor John McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver:

As I am on the Eve of starting for the Snake Country I have to request in case of any Accident happening to me that you will please pay to Mr. William Canning on Order any Sum or Sums of Money which may be due to me by the Hudson Bay Company and also give him all and whatever Effects you may have in your possession appertaining to me.

When a man died or was killed on an expedition it was customary to auction off his clothing and other property. The receipts were credited to his account for the benefit of his family or other heirs.
In addition to serving as doctor, the leader of an expedition assisted his people in a multitude of other ways. When one of his men became lost in the Siskiyou Mountains early in 1827, Ogden went out in the middle of the night, climbed a high hill, and fired shots to direct the man toward camp. He was unsuccessful, but when the trapper wandered in the next morning without shoes and with slightly frozen feet, Ogden gave him both hot broth and a lecture. He despaired at the general carelessness of the men for their own safety. Green hands, he believed, were the worst offenders in this regard, and he preferred "good steady Men" in his brigades. 829

Except for making a good hunt and providing for the well-being of his people, a leader's most important responsibility was to see that the party's horses and mules received the best possible care. These animals were essential to the success of any trapping expedition. As was proved on more than one occasion, the people could make it back to the base fort on foot if the horses were lost, but the furs had to be left behind. Only rarely was travel by canoe practicable in the Snake Country.

If the character of the country permitted, the conductor was careful to select camping spots where grass and water were adequate. When no danger from Indians was apprehended, the animals were sometimes allowed to roam free at night. In no other way could they get enough to eat in the often spare grasslands of the Snake Country. On such occasions a long rope or cord left to dangle from the bridle and trail on the ground made it easier to catch each horse in the morning.
In Indian country, however, horses were closely herded and guarded at night. Ogden recommended that four or five men should stand guard each watch. When danger from horse thieves was extreme, the animals were tied at night, but this practice was employed as infrequently as possible because it prevented the horses from getting proper nourishment. In such cases the animals were "grassed" in the morning as close to the camp as possible. 230

As Ogden, Work, and McLeod discovered, cold winters could be devastating to the horse herds, particularly in the Snake Country. In February, 1831, John Work wrote in his journal: "This cold weather is severe on our lean horses, one is nearly dead this morning, 3 died at our last camp." 831 During the bitter winter of 1827-1828 on Snake River, Ogden's trappers were at first rather slipshod in their care of their livestock. But one morning the horses were found reduced to "a very low state." The men, evidently at long last convinced by Ogden that most of the animals might be lost, "started with robes and skins to cover them and to endeavour if possible to preserve them." 832

Alexander Ross, on the other hand, believed the horses could not only survive winters on the trail but actually thrived during the cold season. Speaking of his brigade's animals, he said:

No fodder is provided for them . . . In snow up to their bellies and often a crust on the top as hard as ice, the horses beat down the crust, scrape off the snow with their forefeet, and feed on the dry and withered grass at the bottom, and passing the winter without a drop of water except from the icicles and snow they happen to eat with their dry and tasteless food. After passing the night in this manner they are bridled, saddled and ridden about by the hunters all day; and when they
arrive at night, covered with sweat, tired and hungry, they are turned out again to dig their supper... in a cold ranging from 20 to 50 below zero of Fahrenheit's thermometer. The exercise may keep them in some degree warm; but the labour necessary to procure their food during night is full as fatiguing and laborious as their labour by day! and yet, these hardy and vigorous animals are always in good condition!

But even Ross had to admit that the horses and mules often suffered cruelly from the rocky terrain found in many parts of the Snake Country. At one point during his 1824 expedition he found that nearly half his animals were "more or less lame, their hoofs being worn to the quick." In a more general vein he continued: "Without being shod no animals can stand the journeys through such rugged country. After one Snake expedition many of them are rendered useless ever after. No less than seventy-seven of our horses had to be muffled about the feet with leather, which is at best a temporary makeshift." It was important, therefore, for the bournois to regulate the route and the length of each day's march so as to spare the animals as much suffering as possible.

On the trail as at the base camp, a never-ending task was the rounding up of stray horses. Nearly every morning when the animals were not tied one or more would be found missing from the herd. Quite often the absent stock, because of careless guarding, had simply scattered and wandered away searching for food. Sometimes they were startled by storms or marauders. On one occasion Ogden reported that a band of wolves drove off forty-nine horses from his herd. Indians were responsible for many losses.

Searches for missing animals were usually tedious and time-consuming, and they were often fruitless. If tracks showed that
Indians had taken the stock, men were sent in pursuit. As has already been discussed in part, if the thieves were overtaken, the outcome of the confrontation varied according to the number of the Indians and their tribe.

If a group of Blackfeet, for example, outnumbered the pursuers, a fight could take place. But if the thieves were outnumbered and out-gunned they often matter of factly gave up the horses without any display of hard feelings. In the words of Ogden, who had a vast experience in such matters, the Blackfeet and Snakes showed "considerable ingenuity and address in stealing Horses and when pursued and overtaken they make all the resistance they can but when in vain resign themselves to their fate without expressing the least regret for their crime but are surprised we do not retaliate in kind on theirs [;] with Indians in general Horse stealing is not considered a crime but viewed more as a profession." 335

Indians belonging to certain other groups would also give up the animals peaceably if confronted, but others would deliberately kill or wound the horses from spite before fleeing. Some natives only stole because they were starving. In such cases there was little chance of recovering the animals alive.

But trapping was the main business of a fur brigade, and it was the leader's job to make certain that his men gathered the greatest possible number of pelts. Like a general, he disposed his forces for maximum effectiveness. Exactly how this was accomplished depended on a variety of circumstances -- the probable number of beaver as indicated by observed "signs," the terrain, the presence or
absence of hostile Indians or rival trappers, and the availability of grass, wood, and water, to name a few.

When an expedition approached new beaver country or was testing the availability of beaver in a region previously trapped, a usual procedure with the British brigades was to send a number of trappers -- the strength of the detachment depending on the anticipated degree of danger from Indians -- ahead along the stream the main party was following. The next day or later the same day the camp would start out and move until it "reached the end" of the traps set by the advance hunters. Here a halt would be made. The traps would be hauled out of the water in the afternoon or evening and then "fresh set" for the night. On Ogden's expeditions, at least, the advance party was to hunt only the main stream, leaving the tributaries for members of the rear party. This process was repeated until a promising hunting ground was found. 837

Once a good location for beaver was discovered, the leader selected "a safe and secure spot near wood and water" for a camp which was called "headquarters." 838 Here the conductor and the "property" remained. With him he kept the families, as well as the Indians and perhaps a few other men to guard the horses. The trappers were sent out to test the nearby streams for beaver. It was not unusual for "all" the hunters to be away setting their traps before nightfall on the same day the camp was established.

According to Alexander Ross, however, the more routine procedure at "headquarters" was as follows: "From hence all the trappers, some on foot, some on horseback according to the distance they have to go, start every morning in small parties in all directions,
ranging the distance of some twenty miles around. Six traps is the allowance of each hunter, but to guard against wear and tear the complement is more frequently ten. These he sets every night and visits again in the morning sometimes oftener; according to the distance or other circumstances. The beavers taken in the traps are always conveyed to the camp, skinned . . . and the flesh used for food. No sooner therefore has a hunter visited his traps, set them again, and looked out for some other place [to hunt the next day] than he returns to camp, to feast and enjoy the pleasures of an idle day.339

But a perusal of fur brigade journals reveals that the procedure was not always this cut and dried. In fact there was a good deal of variation, although Ross was correct in one regard: the scattered parties were usually small, the actual size depending on the degree of danger anticipated from the Indians. In the Snake Country the general rule was that trappers should not go out alone. In 1832 as Work's party was traveling along Silvies River signs indicated the presence of the Snakes, whom the Chief Trader characterized as "very treacherous barbarous Indians." As a result, he noted, "The men are directed to be particularly careful when hunting & never to go less than two together lest they be surprised."340

The hunters may have left camp in small parties, but once they got on the beaver streams they sometimes separated. Accounts of Indian attacks reveal that trappers occasionally were off working alone when they were jumped by Indians or when they escaped the fate that befell companions setting traps nearby.
Historians of the fur trade sometimes state that one of the differences between British brigades and American parties was in their relative sizes, the Hudson's Bay companies usually being larger and more compact while the Americans "scattered everywhere in small parties, sometimes of four men or less."341 While it is true that the British brigades were year after year on a regular basis larger than the American parties, some of the better organized groups from Missouri were fully as large as the Snake brigade as far as the number of men was concerned, though the Americans were less likely to have families along. And when it came to the small bands that did the actual trapping, there was very little difference between British and Americans as far as size and hunting methods were concerned.

As Ross indicated and as Ogden told his people in 1827, the trappers were not supposed to remain away from the headquarters camp over night. Again, however, the journals reveal that this rule was often broken, though on such occasions the men usually either were ordered to stay out or received permission to do so. Trappers sometimes remained away from the main party for several days or even for weeks, generally for as long as they were taking beaver or until the date assigned for them to rejoin the brigade.

Although the Columbia Department fur returns shipped to London contained a variety of pelts -- badger, bear, fisher, fox, lynx, martin, mink, muskrat, sea otter, and others -- the trapping brigades were really only interested in beaver skins, though land otters and sea otters were taken if found. But since the British brigades also traded with the Indians, a number of assorted pelts sometimes turned
up in the returns. This was particularly true after 1833 when the Snake Party shifted its emphasis from trapping to trading. In 1846, for example, the Snake expedition yielded more muskrat than beaver skins.

In the great days of the Snake expeditions and during the life of the Southern parties, however, it was beaver the trappers sought. And the search was difficult and dangerous. Alexander Ross painted a graphic picture of the anxiety under which a trapper worked:

"[Since] the enemy generally is lurking about among the rocks and hiding places watching an opportunity, the hunter has to keep a constant lookout. And the gun is often in one hand, while the trap is in the other; but when several are together, which is often the case in suspicious places, one half set the traps and the other half keep guard over them. Yet notwithstanding all the precautions some of them fall victims to Indian treachery."

While keeping alert for the "dreadful war-whoop," the trapper had to exert a considerable physical effort to carry out his mission. Arriving at a place where "sign" -- a dam, a runway, tree cuttings, and the like -- showed the presence of beaver, he placed his heavy traps on his back -- each one weighed between two and a half and five pounds without the attached chains -- took his rifle in his hand, and walked quietly along the bank or, better, in the water until experience told him he had arrived at a good spot to "make his set."

His next move was to cock his trap. This was fairly easily accomplished, if firm ground was available, by standing with a foot
on each spring. If no solid base could be found, a special "squeezer" made of two sticks was employed.

Next, if he had not done so before opening his trap, the hunter prepared a bed for his trap, wading in the water while doing so in order to leave no human scent. This bed had to be about four inches beneath the surface of the water, so it was usually necessary either to excavate or to fill the stream bottom. The trap was placed on its bed, and the attached trap chain, about five feet long with a ring on its free end, was extended to its full length into deeper water. A long stake, called a "float stick," was driven through the chain ring and deep into the stream bed. This pole was always made of dead wood to prevent the beaver from gnawing it for food.

The final step was to place the "bait." A thin twig or switch was fastened to the bank or bottom so that one end, peeled of bark, hung about four to six inches above the water and directly over the trap pan. The free end of the stick was smeared with castoreum which the trapper carried in his bait bottle. Having completed his set, the hunter waded away for a considerable distance before stepping on the shore. He repeated this process until all his traps were in place.

The beaver, drawn by the scent of the castoreum ("the musty secretion of the beaver's perineal glands"), attempted to reach the bait with his mouth and in so doing stepped on the pan of the trap and was caught. Seeking escape he headed for deeper water but could get no farther than the length of the chain from the stake. Held
down by the weight of the trap, he drowned. Sometimes a beaver was able to pull the float stick from the stream bottom and to go a considerable distance under water before succumbing; occasionally a trapped beaver made it to shore, but the heavy trap and the float stick, which could easily get caught in brush or other obstructions, made it difficult for him to escape if the hunter arrived before the animal could gnaw himself free.

Theoretically if fresh signs of beaver were observed, the traps placed by this method should have produced a beaver at almost every set. But beavers were timid, wily, and intelligent animals who often refused to be caught. In addition, there were many other factors leading to failure. Indians quite frequently stole traps or took the trapped beaver for food; or the natives broke the beaver dams and made the animals "very wild." The waters of the Far West, whether from spring thaws in the mountains or from tidal rise and fall near San Francisco Bay, tended to fluctuate in depth. But for trapping the depth of the water was critical. Peter Skene Ogden explained the reason succinctly: "Few," he noted in his journal in 1827, "are aware of the strength of beaver when taken if the water is shallow which is often the case in small streams and he does not drown it is scarcely credible the resistance he makes and if the Trap be good or bad he soon proves it, when taken by the fore foot in shallow water he soon makes for Land and is not long in freeing himself of the Trap by resorting to his grinders soon performs amputation but in deep water by placing the Traps from four to six inches under water he is
taken by the hind foot and cannot manage to amputate and soon drowns.\textsuperscript{846}

American trappers ordinarily skinned their beaver near where they were taken and only brought the pelts, the castorin glands, and the tails -- considered a delicacy -- back to camp.\textsuperscript{847} According to Ross, however, Hudson's Bay hunters "always" carried the entire animal to camp, since the flesh was used for food.\textsuperscript{848} If there were no families along, the hunters skinned the carcasses and dried and folded the skins themselves, but usually these tasks were assumed -- expertly -- by the women. On rare occasions, however, the men performed these chores even when the families were present. During March, 1827, Ogden found his party camped in the Rogue River region, soaked by rain. "The Trappers are not idle," he wrote, "and we have a number of green skins that must be dressed without delay fair or foul weather." The next day the sky cleared, and he noted: "the men in the Camp dress'd their Beaver and the Lady's employed all day in Skin[n]ing and dressing also drying the meat."\textsuperscript{849}

During that same expedition Ogden on one occasion remarked in his journal: "It is a pleasure to observe the Ladys of the Camp vieing with each other who will produce on their return to Fort Vancouver the cleanest and best dress'd Beaver."\textsuperscript{850} And, as has already been mentioned, the quality of the Snake Party returns improved considerably under Ogden's direction. This achievement was not due solely to any affection his people may have had for him. He told Work in 1830: "The Men in general are careful of their Beaver. Still you will require to give both them and the leaders [ladies] a hint occasionally by reminding the former a Shilling less
will be paid for each skin and the latter their usual presents will be curtailed [if their furs have not been properly dressed and cared for].

Skinning a beaver was a fairly standardized procedure. The skin was slit the length of the animal's under side; then cuts were made along the inside of each leg and around the base of the tail. The feet were cut off and the pelt peeled from the carcass, eased along if necessary by a blunt instrument such as an elk bone wedge which would not cut the skin.

The skin was then scraped with a sharp knife or axe blade to remove any clinging fat and flesh. Next it was stretched on a hoop which ranged from eighteen inches to three feet in diameter, depending on the size of the skin. These hoops were made from willow withes bent circular by binding the ends together. The edges of the pelt were sewed to the hoop with cord or sinew. The stretched skins were dried by being exposed to the sun, flesh side to the direct rays.

After it was dried, the pelt was folded once, fur side in. In this condition a beaver skin weighed from one and a half pounds to two pounds for adults and about half that for pups. About fifty to sixty plus, as the furs were sometimes called, were piled together and pressed tightly to make a pack weighing about ninety pounds. Each pack was protected by a tight wrapper of dry leather -- deerskin most often but elk or buffalo hides at times.

British fur brigade journals thus far examined for this study are silent as to the method used to press the pelts in the field. It
is known that American trappers improvised several types of crude presses, and it is assumed the Company's men did likewise. Two packs, with a total weight of about 180 pounds, made the normal load for a pack animal. But once the furs were safely placed on the horse or mule the work of caring for them was not over. Even if no accidents were encountered during the journey, the pelts had to be unpacked at intervals and "dusted," that is beaten to eliminate dangerous insects and aired to dry out any moisture. In damp climates mildew was always a danger. Of course if packs got wet in crossing streams or because of rain or brushing against damp foliage, the skins were dried in the sun. As Ogden remarked in 1827, the furs "cannot be two [sic] often examined." As long as two-thirds of the hunters had their traps in the water a camp ordinarily remained stationary. But when the beaver in one locality were so reduced in numbers or so thoroughly frightened that trapping was no longer profitable, the brigade moved on.

At rare intervals before a camp was shifted the men hid or "cached" some of their supplies, provisions, equipment, and even furs. The usual reason for this expedient was a desire to lighten the load when the party intended to return to that spot at a later date. Sometimes, however, the cache was a matter of necessity, as was the case when McLeod lost all his horses in 1829. Without pack animals or if makeshift canoes could not be employed, there was no way to get the heavy baggage and returns to the home fort. The goods were therefore concealed with the intention of returning for them at a more convenient time or with renewed means of transportation.
The classic description of a cache is given by the great fur-trade historian, Hiram Martin Chittenden:

The cache, as ordinarily prepared, consisted of a deep pit in the ground in the construction of which the point of paramount importance was to avoid any trace of the work which might attract attention after it was completed. The size of the pit depended upon the quantity it was to hold. The pit was lined with sticks and dry leaves after which the goods were carefully disposed therein, and all perishable articles, such as provisions or fur, were protected with the utmost care. This was a vital matter for it frequently happened that valuable articles were found spoiled.

Occasionally natural caves, hollow tree trunks, or other suitable hiding places were used, but the general rule was to dig a hole in the ground. These pits could be circular, square, or bottle-shaped. A usual means of concealment was to build a fire over the filled hole. If a cache was dug in a grass-covered location, the sod was carefully replaced and all surplus soil disposed of in a stream or other place where it would not be detected by sharp-eyed Indians.

Although most caches were for goods of the brigade as a whole, individual trappers sometimes separately hid their individual property. The hunters of the Southern Party, for example, occasionally cached their traps at the Marysville Buttes or other favorite camping spot so that they would not have to carry these heavy implements to Fort Vancouver and then all the way back to California again the next year. Evidently these hunters did not trust their fellow trappers, since each man often secretly hid his own traps.

Breaking camp also involved other traditional and necessary procedures. It has been seen that Ogden informed Work in 1830 that it was customary for the leader to give "the calls" to get the party
in motion on a moving day and to indicate where to camp in the afternoon. The nature of the calls is not indicated, but it is likely, though nowhere so stated, that the traditional canoe brigade call of "levé, levé, levé" was used to awaken the camp at dawn. When Alexander Ross led his party to the Lost River region in 1824 he wrote: "Got a drum made for the use of the camp. It is beat every evening regularly at the watch over the horses and to rouse all hands in the morning." It is not known that his successors employed a similar instrument.

If it had been raining shortly before a moving day, the start was usually delayed several hours to dry the lodges, packs, and other equipment. Since wet brush and tree branches could damage the furs, it was also necessary to wait for the foliage to dry if the trail ahead went through dense woods or brush.

Since trapping brigades largely lived off the country, hunting was a major consideration. Ordinarily each party contained several men who were designated as "hunters," and they were sent out almost daily searching for game. Depending on the country traversed, deer, elk, antelope, and even bear were the principal animals killed. But the favorite food of the trappers was buffalo. During the days of the large brigades these animals were fairly numerous in parts of the Snake Country, and when a herd was encountered almost the entire company joined in the chase. General hunting also was common when food was scarce.

Evidently when the men killed game on their own, that is when
not designated hunters, they could keep it for themselves and their families except for the portions they were obligated to turn in to the *bourgeois*. Ogden records an instance when men sent out to look for a horse returned to camp with four deer. "Unfortunately," he commented, "it so happens those that kill with the exception of two are not of a very generous disposition." In times of hunger, some of the men who were sufficiently successful at hunting to satisfy their own needs would sell the meat to their less fortunate companions. When this occurred in 1827 during one of Ogden's expeditions, the going price was a beaver pelt for a deer. He attempted to discourage the practice by assisting the needy himself. But he could not be too strict, for he realized that if starving men could not buy meat they would kill their horses.

Wildfowl were also much relished when they could be shot, but they were not a dependable source of food for a large party. It took a great many ducks and geese to satisfy the hunger of a band of active trappers. Little attention was paid to fishing while on the trail of beaver, but salmon and other fish were obtained from the Indians whenever opportunity offered. And in extremity the trappers would fish themselves. When Ogden's men were nearly starving in the Lower Klamath Lake region during December, 1826, they made a net and tried fishing.

The trappers did not scorn dog meat whenever these animals could be traded from the Indians. Although the French-Canadians especially were fond of this food, even officers ate it on occasion and found it
When extremely hungry the trappers bargained with the Indians for camas roots and other native foods even though such exotic fare often made them ill.

But as the daily journals clearly reveal, large game, wildfowl, and traded provisions were at times extremely scarce in the Snake Country and even in southern Oregon and California. For much of the time the expedition personnel, from the leader downwards, ate the flesh of the beaver caught in the traps. Unlike the Americans, the British consumed the flesh from the entire carcass of the animal and not merely that supreme mountain delicacy, the tail. From all indications beaver meat was generally liked, although on certain streams eating it could cause severe illness due, it was believed, to hemlock ingested by the animals. A crude remedy of gunpowder and pepper mixed with water seemed to give some relief. On most trips through the Snake Country beaver meat was the usual staple.

Whenever the beaver and other game failed, resort was had to killing the expedition's horses. Horse meat was considered a delicacy, and the men did not always wait until they were starving to eat it. Any horse or mule that met an accidental death or which had to be killed because it could not keep up with the party was almost sure to find its way to the cooking pot. In 1826, for instance, when some of Ogden's men inadvertently strangled a wild horse in trying to break it in, the leader remarked that though the animal was lost, "his flesh shall not share the same fate -- as already it has been distributed to every lodge in the camp."
Cooking generally was a simple matter. Boiling in kettles was the preferred method, but meat was also roasted on sticks before the fire. British trappers, at least, believed beaver meat needed to be "uncommonly well cooked more so with the exception of Bears flesh than any other food." Occasionally the cooking had a gourmet touch. British botanist David Douglas, traveling with McLeod's 1826-1827 Southern Party, was amused when one of the French-Canadians "served shoulder of doe for breakfast, basting it with Canada mint and sugar and serving it on salal leaves in lieu of plates."

Chief Trader John McLeod, who headed the Snake Party to the American rendezvous in 1836, told a missionary: "There is no Sabbath in this country." Hudson's Bay Company brigade journals reveal that this statement was largely true. Ordinarily the parties moved and the men trapped on Sunday as on any other day of the week. Only rarely did a journal entry read, as did John Work's for January 22, 1832: "This being Sunday we did not raise camp." But at least a sprinkling of the people made an attempt to observe the day. Botanist David Douglas, with McLeod's 1826-1827 expedition, "noted that the only distinguishing marks of a Sunday on the trail were a changing of linen by some of the more fastidious mountain men and a perusal of Catholic religious tracts in the evening."

Christmas Day also often passed without any special recognition, at least as far as the journals reveal. John Work's record was again an exception to the general rule when he wrote on Sunday, December 25, 1831: "Being Christmas Day we did not raise camp. Owing to our not
having fallen in with buffalo lately many of the people fared but indifferently having only dry meat, and several not much of that."

On December 25 a year earlier, however, he made no mention of the day being Christmas.

But there were two holidays that were almost always observed — All Saints' Day and New Year's Day. Work's journal entry for November 1, 1830, was typical: "This being All Saints Day and a fast & holiday with the Canadians we did not raise camp." New Year's Day was the most enthusiastically and universally celebrated holiday, however, as is shown by Work's note for January 1, 1832: "This being Sunday and New Years Day neither our people nor the Indians went in pursuit of buffalo tho' large herds were to be seen far off. The men and some of the principal Indians were treated with a dram and some cakes in the morning, and a small quantity of rum had been brought from the fort for the occasion." A number of other journals attest to the fact that this "treat" of rum and cakes was an established custom.

Almost never did the brigade members have an opportunity to observe Easter properly. But in 1833, when Work's party was camped near Sonoma in California, the leader noted: "This being Easter day we did not raise camp. Some of the people went to the Mission to hear divine service."

Since receiving its license to the exclusive right of British trade in the region west of Rupert's Land in 1821, the Company had maintained a policy of abolishing or restricting the use of liquor in trade with Indians. But it was not enforced in the frontier
regions of bitter competition with Canadian free traders or with Americans and Russians.

The Snake Country was one of the most fiercely contested areas in the entire field of the Company’s operations. Yet liquor seems to have been a minor consideration in the firm’s campaign to control the trade of the region. Ogden’s brigade of 1827-1828, for example, did carry in its outfit from Fort Vancouver three gallons of brandy, twenty-one gallons of "Demerara Rum," and three and one-eighth gallons of Jamaica rum. These items, however, were listed as "Provisions," and they probably constituted little more than the spirits required for a party of thirty men which was expected to be in the field for nearly a year.

It seems doubtful that much of this liquor was available for trading. In fact, when in his winter camp on Snake River Ogden’s journal entries appear to imply that he had none, at least for trade. He feared that a party of Americans camped near him would travel to their base near Great Salt Lake and then return with reinforcements to trade and trap. "I principally dread their returning with liquor," he remarked in his journal. "If so it would be most advantageous to them but the reverse to me." Then he added, "had I the same opportunity . . . long since I would have a good stock of liquor here, and every beaver in the [Indian] camp would be mine."882

In 1840 McLoughlin carried this restriction a step further. He told the Governor and Committee on November 20, 1840, "this year we
have entirely abolished the use of Spiritous Liquors among the trappers in the Snake Country and I am happy to be able to say with the most beneficial effect." But by that time the great days of the brigades were over, so the long-suffering veterans of the Snake Party did not have to suffer this denial of one of their few comforts.

In addition to the excessive trading and racing of horse, perhaps the principal vice of the Company's trappers was gambling. At his winter camp on Snake River in January, 1828, Ogden neatly summed up the situation among his snowbound men: "they are now making snow shoes and the remainder pass their time in gambling. I know not how it happens but from the best of my knowledge, no cards are sold to the men at Fort Vancouver still they continue to procure them at that place and this year no less than four packs. It so happens that he who can least afford it is the greatest gambler and also loser since we have been in winter quarters. From the dawn of day till late at night they are gambling, and from all appearances are determined to continue as long as we are obliged to remain idle."

At the end of their journey the people had a few days or, if they were lucky, a few weeks to "enjoy themselves" resting with their families at Fort Nez Percés or strutting about the village at Fort Vancouver. But soon enough they were headed back for the hard and precarious life on the trail.

What it meant to be a trapper with a Hudson's Bay Company fur brigade has never been better stated than by Peter Skene Ogden as he sat in his camp in southern Oregon on March 14, 1827, immobilized
by snow and rain: "It is certainly most harassing for the poor
Trappers to Trap in such weather, obliged to sleep out and two thirds
without a Blanket to cover them. Still not one complains but exert
themselves to procure Beaver with all their might & main.

"Poor fellows, at times at least when I see them arrive, which
is too often the case in this climate, drenched in rain and shivering
with cold [I] feel most keenly for them. The life of a Trapper,
altho' at times he has some idle hours which however does not often
happen, is certainly a most laborious one and one [which] in four
years makes a young man look almost as if he had reached the advanced
age of sixty. Of this many convincing proofs are now amongst my
party. The cold water which more or less they are wading in two
thirds of the day, added to the cold and sleeping often without fire
and wet to the skin, conduces to ruin their constitutions. Well do
they earn their 10 Shillings per Beaver. A convict in Botany Bay is
a Gent living at his ease compared to them.

"Still they are happy, and amidst all their sufferings and
privations if they take Beaver all is well. Thoughtless beings, how
much more comfortable and with less labour could they earn an honest
livelihood in their own Country than they do in this. And many are
aware of this, but a roving life pleases them, and with nearly all
it would be viewed more as punishment than a favour to send them
to Canada."885
NOTES

1. Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada . . . (Yale Western Americana ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 38. It is not entirely certain, however, whether "hunt" meant "trap" or "trade" in this instance.

2. Ibid., 135, 264.


4. For a detailed account of this method, based on original sources, see Carl P. Russell, Firearms, Traps, & Tools of the Mountain Men (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 93-102. It was not desirable to use hunting methods that pierced the skins of the beaver or permitted them to be soaked with blood.

5. Thompson, Travels, 160.


7. Thompson, Travels, 160-161. The great historian of the Canadian fur trade, Harold A. Innis, believed that the use of steel traps for beaver probably spread westward slowly, since these devices were heavy to carry. However, the fact that in 1764 Sir William Johnson, British Superintendent of Indian Affairs in North America, believed that 5000 beaver traps were required for the Indian trade would seem to indicate widespread use even by that date. Innis, The Fur Trade, 263-264; Russell, Firearms, Traps, & Tools, 124-125.


18. Ibid., 260.


21. Ibid., 396.

22. Dale L. Morgan, Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953), 19-20. Ordinarily a somewhat later date is given for this advertisement, but Morgan makes clear the sequence of newspapers in which the notice appeared.

23. Ibid., 28-29.

24. Ibid., 91-92.

25. Ibid., 156, 171; Phillips, The Fur Trade, II, 396. Phillips appears to indicate that Ashley and Henry had intended to employ the rendezvous system from the inception of their partnership, but Morgan seems to believe that it was two or three years before Ashley fully grasped the significance of the concept.


29. It is recognized that men of the North West Company and perhaps a few freemen had crossed the Rockies prior to 1805, but continuous operations did not begin until that year or, more exactly, perhaps, until 1806. For an excellent summary of the fur trade in these inland regions to 1811, see Arthur S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 466-497.


31. Morton, History of the Canadian West, 479.


33. Ibid., 268.


36. Gabriel Franchère, Narrative of a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America in the Years 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1814 . . . (New York, 1854), 130, 142.


42. Ross, Adventures of the First Settlers, 219.

43. Ibid., 215-221.

44. Irving, Astoria, 443, 445, 448, 453-454n.


46. Irving, Astoria, 454-455n, 498.


49. HBR 13, xxx. It is generally stated that these decisions were made at the council meeting during June, 1816. However, a careful reading of Ross seems to show that news of several of the reforms was received at Fort George by the express which arrived in the fall of 1815 and that the changes were discussed at the Fort George Council during June, 1816. The appointment of McKenzie to the inland command evidently was known at Fort George during June, several months before that gentleman's arrival in October, 1816. Therefore the deliberations resulting in the changes must have taken place in 1815. This view is shared by D. W. Meinig, The Great Columbia Plain . . . (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 61.

50. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 55-57.

51. Ibid., 68. Elliott Coues states that McKenzie was at Fort George on September 30, 1816. New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, II, 761n.

52. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 71.

53. Ibid., 78-81. Phillips states that McKenzie spent the winter of 1816-1817 "trading through the country," seeming to indicate that "explorations" were made at that time. The Fur Trade, II, 303. However, in view of the fact that he was at Spokane House on February 12, 1817, and that he returned to Fort George shortly thereafter, it is likely that Ross was correct when he implied that McKenzie's operations were largely confined to visiting "several" of the posts under his charge.
54. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 83.
55. Ibid., 108-111.
56. Ibid., 117-120, 146.
57. Ibid., 121-125. As has been seen, previous trapping activities in the Snake Country had been carried on by small groups of hunters. Even the Americans to the east, though Lisa and others had sent large bodies to the mountains, had hitherto generally operated by scattering small parties over wide areas. McKenzie's contribution was the use of large, heavily armed bands to hunt in regions where Indians were hostile, though his men often separated into smaller parties once the trapping grounds had been reached.
59. Peter Skene Ogden wrote in 1826: "The Snake Country is bounded on the North by the Columbia Waters On the South by the Missourie, On the West by the Spanish Territories and the East by the Saskatchewan Tribes." HBRS XIII, 262.
60. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 125.
62. HBRS XIII, 87-88.
63. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 134-136. Identification of the Bear River as one of the features discovered by McDonald is based on sources cited in Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 96.
64. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 138.
65. Ibid., 139.
66. Ibid., 142.
67. Ibid., 149. In a journal written in 1824, Alexander Ross stated that McKenzie had ordered Kittson to build a post near the mouth of Boise River in the summer of 1819 but that the place was burned by Indians before completion and that two men were killed. T. C. Elliott, ed., "Journal of Alexander Ross -- Snake Country Expedition, 1824," in OHQ, XIV (December, 1913), 330, 334. See also Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 97n; and HBRS XIII, 91, 224. Ross does not mention such an event in his Fur Hunters.
68. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 149-153, 171.

69. Ibid., 177; Qline, Exploring the Great Basin, 93, citing a letter in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.


72. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 176. See also note 69 above.

73. Ibid., 182-183.

74. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 397, note 20.

75. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 185.

76. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 118. As Morgan points out (p. 395, note 3) Ross's narrative was long almost the only source concerning McKenzie's expeditions, but new materials are now available which require further study. For a more detailed summary of his activities, see Jean C. Nielsen, "Donald McKenzie in the Snake Country Fur Trade, 1816-1821," in Pacific Northwest Quarterly, XXXI (April, 1940), 161-179.

77. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 185. Ross says McKenzie had been hired by the North West Company under a lump-sum agreement and that he returned East because his "contract" with the firm had "expired," but since McKenzie was a partner in the company it is difficult to believe that Ross fully understood the situation. Ross also says that McKenzie went East in the autumn of 1822, but this would have been impossible since the new chief factor attended a council at Norway House during June of that year.


79. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 118.

80. Ibid., 118-119; Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 98.


82. Ibid., 860.

83. Ibid., 861.
84. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 72-73.

85. Ibid., 73.

86. Ibid., 74-77.

87. Ibid., 132.

88. Ibid., 132-133. This expedition probably was not the first to trap on the Umpqua. There are reports that the Astorians penetrated to this region. The Umpqua massacre appears to have taken place in 1819. Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of the Northwest Coast (2 vols., San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft and Co., 1884), 288-289. It is possible that this expedition was not a separate one but was identical with one said to have been sent out under Thomas McKay during 1820. E. E. Rich, ed., The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, Second Series, 1832-44 (Publications of the Hudson's Bay Record Society, vol. VI, London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society 1943) (hereafter cited as HBRS VI), 114.


90. HBRS VI, 114.

91. For a slightly different account of this affair, see Frederick Merk, ed., Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal . . . 1824-1825 . . . (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), 113.

92. HBRS XIII, xx.


94. Ibid., 134.

95. T. C. Elliott, "Peter Skene Ogden, Fur Trader," in OHQ, XI (September, 1910), 241. Ogden's exact movements during these years have not yet been determined.

96. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, xxviii.


98. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 176-177.

99. Ibid., 193.
100. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 195.
101. HBRS IV, xxii.
102. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 208.
103. Ibid., 42.
104. Ibid., 54.
105. Ibid., 94-95.
106. Ibid., 102.
107. Ibid., 94.
108. Ibid., 89-90; HBRS III, xxvii-xxviii.
110. Ibid., 185.

111. For policy statements by Simpson and the London directors in this regard, see Ibid., 46, 242, 252.

112. HBRS III, xxvii. It should be noted that the "fur desert" policy was not confined to the Columbia. It had long been applied east of the mountains whenever foreign competition threatened.

113. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 52.
114. Ibid., 88.
115. Ibid., 90.
116. Ibid., 114.
117. Ibid., 114, 195, 248-250.
118. Ibid., 141-142.


121. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, xxix.
122. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 120.

124. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 194. Ross says that after McKenzie left the Columbia in 1821 the old North Wester prejudices in favor of Spokane House "were revived." Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 207-208.

125. This account is based largely upon Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 120-121; see also Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 193-194.

126. HBRS III, 24. Bourdon's name also appears in the records as Bourdeau, Le Bourdeau, and Bordoe.


128. What McLoughlin described as a journal of the "transactions" of the "1822/3" Snake Expedition is in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, A.208/a/1. However, since it was kept by McDonald from April 15-July 22, 1822, and by James Birnie from July 23, 1822-April 20, 1823, it cannot cover McDonald's 1823 journey.

129. HBRS XIII, 16, 214.

130. Finan McDonald to John George McTavish, April 5, 1824, as quoted in Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 122-123. The editor of the 1956 edition of Ross's Fur Hunters identifies the site of this encounter as near Brenner, Montana. However, a careful reading of the Ogden and Kittson journals in HBRS XIII, 21-25, 217-219, clearly indicates that the site was on the western side of Lemhi Pass. Morgan also seems to take the latter view. Jedediah Smith, 124.

131. HBRS XXIII, 92.

132. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 123. For a more detailed account of the battle, see Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 239-242.

133. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 123.

134. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 207.

135. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 125.

136. HBRS III, 53. This account of McDonald's expedition is based largely on Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 121-125, supplemented by Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 207-208. For further sources, see those cited by John S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 442, notes 20-21.
137. HBRS III, 53.
138. Ibid., 53n; Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, p. 442, note 22; Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 206-207.
139. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 206-208.
140. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 198.
141. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 208-209.
142. Ibid.; Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 100; Elliott, "Journal of Alexander Ross," in OHQ, XIV, 369-370. However, according to a notation based on Ross's original manuscript journal, the party consisted of "10 servants and 54 men and lads." HBRS X, 526.
143. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 213.
144. Ibid., 245-246.
145. Elliott, "Journal of Alexander Ross," 382; Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 127-128; Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 251-252, 282. Ross’s accounts differ as to where he was to rendezvous with the Iroquois.
147. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 267.
148. There is a conflict of evidence as to where the Iroquois were to rejoin the party. In one place Ross says the rendezvous was to be at the Three Buttes on the Snake Plains. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 232. There is also a difference of opinion as to the place where Ross waited for the Iroquois. The anonymous author of the article, "The Adventures of Alexander Ross in the Snake Country," who evidently has seen Ross's original manuscript journal, favors the Pahsimeroi location (p. 14), while the editor of Fur Hunters of the Far West declares for the Lemhi (p. 282).
149. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 284.
151. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 128.
152. Ibid., 115, 128.
155. "Journal of Alexander Ross," 385; Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 130; "Adventures of Alexander Ross," 14. Phillips thinks the Bitterroot Mountains were crossed "probably" by Lost Trail Pass. The Fur Trade, II, 446. Ross's original journal of his expedition is in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg (B.202/a/1), but as far as the present writer is aware it has not yet been published in its entirety. Excerpts published in the already cited "Journal of Alexander Ross" are of interest and value but do not permit an accurate reconstruction of the route. The best account in print is in Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 206-293, but Ross wrote it many years after the event, and although he obviously referred to a journal or other notes, there are a number of inaccuracies. Both Morgan and the anonymous author of "The Adventures of Alexander Ross" obtained information from the manuscript journal, and thus their narratives throw new light on the expedition.

156. HBRX III, 53n; Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 293.

157. "Journal of Alexander Ross," 386; Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 293; Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 83; Rich, History of the Hudson's Bay Company, II, 432. Ross was to receive only $100 per year as schoolmaster instead of the $120 he was said as head of the Snake parties.

158. HBRX III, 34.

159. For proof that Simpson heard from Ross while at Spokane House, see Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 46, 247.

160. Ibid., 45-46.

161. Ibid., 46.

162. Ibid., 44-47. The instructions to reach the Colorado River were based on a misconception that the Bear River, only the upper waters of which had been examined by earlier British expeditions, was a branch of the Colorado. For a discussion of this matter see Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 101.


164. HBRX XIII, 209.


166. HBRX XIII, 2-3, 209-210; Contrast with "Journal of Alexander Ross," 338. In 1829 Governor Simpson said that Ogden's first expedition was "our largest . . . consisting of 58 men." HBRX X, 52.
168. For examples, see HBRS XIII, 6, 7.
169. Ibid., 7.
170. Ibid., 18-19, 216.
172. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 45.
173. HBRS XIII, xl.
175. HBRS XIII, 219.
176. Ibid., 29-32, 225. The editor of Ogden’s journal has mistakenly identified Little Lost River as the present Birch Creek. See Morgan, Jedediah Smith, p. 399, note 8.
177. HBRS XIII, 35, 227.
178. Ibid., 43.
179. The location of this camp is given as identified by Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 145, 403. Ogden’s journal is not clear on this point.
180. HBRS XIII, 51; Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 151.
181. HBRS XXIII, 139. Credit for pointing out that the only British were not bound by the Treaty of 1818 and hence did not consider the southern boundary of the Columbia Department to be the 42nd parallel belongs to David E. Miller and David H. Miller in their fine introduction to Glyndwr Williams, ed., Peter Skene Ogden’s Snake Country Journals, 1827-28 and 1828-29 (Publications of the Hudson’s Bay Record Society, vol. XXVIII, London: The Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1971), xix-xx.
182. HBRS XIII, 49-56; 233-236. For a discussion of the number of skins lost to the deserters, see HBRS IV, lxxvi.
183. HBRS XIII, 60.
184. Ibid., 60-68.
185. Ibid., 68, 243.
186. HBRS XIII, 63.
187. Ibid., 70.
188. Ibid., 79.
189. Ibid., 84.
190. This account of Ogden's first expedition is based almost entirely on T. C. Elliott, "The Peter Skene Ogden Journals: Snake Expedition, 1825-1826," in OHQ, X (December, 1909), 332-334; and on the journals of Ogden and Kittson published in HBRS XIII, 2-93, 209-257. Two path-breaking articles on this expedition by Frederick Merk, "Snake Country Expedition, 1824-25" and "The Snake Country Expedition Correspondence, 1824-1825," are conveniently reprinted, with some revisions, in Frederick Merk, The Oregon Question (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 72-98. For additional details on certain sections of Ogden's route, see HBRS XXVIII, 169-172.
191. Ogden to Simpson, Fort Nez Percés, November 12, 1825, in HBRS XIII, 255-256.
192. HBRS XIII, 257.
193. Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 92; HBRS X, 53.
194. "McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders, Fort Vancouver, August 10, 1825, as cited in Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 144.
195. HBRS IV, 296-299.
196. Ibid., 302-304.
197. Ibid., 10.
198. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 270.
199. Ibid., 256.
200. H.B.C., Correspondence Book, Fort Vancouver, 1825, in Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg (hereafter cited as HBCA), B.223/b/1, "S", fols. 10-10d. All materials in the Company's Archives cited in this study were consulted with the kind permission of the Hudson's Bay Company.
201. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 270.
202. HBRS IV, 28.
204. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 290-291.
205. HBRs IV, 34.
206. Ibid.; Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 92.
207. HBRs III, lxvii-lxviii.
208. HBRs IV, lxiii-lxiv; Merk, The Oregon Question, 82-84.
209. HBRs IV, 10; HBRs XIII, 95n. In another statement McLoughlin said there were only four Indians in McDonald's party. Not a single woman was allowed to accompany that expedition.
HBRs XIII, 97n. However, in 1829 Governor Simpson said that Ogden's party consisted of 38 men. HBRs X, 53.
211. HBRs XIII, 103.
212. Ibid., 118.
213. Ibid., 123.
214. Ibid., 126.
215. Ibid., 260.
216. Ibid., 129.
217. Ibid., 131n, 204. See also Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 273-274.
218. HBRs XIII, 204n. That the return of Gervaise (or Gervais) was prior to July 17 is inferred from the fact that on that date Ogden recorded that "all" his party had returned safely. Ibid., 205. For information on both these parties, see ibid., 264.
219. Ibid., 137.
220. Ibid., 143.
221. Ibid., 153, 256.
222. Ibid., 154.
223. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 170, 172. See also Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 284.
224. HERS XIII, 155.

225. Ibid., 163-164.

226. Ibid., 195n. Finan McDonald went down the Columbia only as far as The Dalles, where the inland boat brigade was met. His family was with the brigade in anticipation of going "out" to Red River, and McDonald returned with them to Walla Walla.

227. The editor of Ogden's Journal believes that Ogden started his canoe voyage down the Willamette from the vicinity of the present New Era, but no reason for this identification is given. Ibid., 205n.

228. Ibid., 205. An incomplete transcript of Ogden's journal for this expedition was published in T. C. Elliott, ed., "Journal of Peter Skene Ogden: Snake Expedition, 1825-1826," in OHR, X (December, 1909), 331-365. This valuable article has since been superseded by the publication of the complete journal in HERS XIII, 95-205.

229. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 283.

230. HERS IV, 27-28; HERS X, 53; OHQ, X, 365.

231. HERS IV, lxvii; Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 280.

232. John McLoughlin to John Warren Desse, Fort Vancouver, August 8, 1826, in H.R.C., Fort Vancouver, Correspondence Book, 1826, HBCA, E.223/b/2, vs, fols. 16-17.


234. Ogden to Simpson, Burnt River, July 1, 1826, in Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 274-277; see also Ebid., 281-284.

235. Ibid., 283.

236. HERS IV, lxvi. See also Ebid., 33-34.

237. HERS XXIII, 229, 233.

238. HERS IV, lxvi.

239. Ibid., 33. For the identification of "Lac Sale" as Great Salt Lake, see HERS XXIII, xlii. For a discussion of the Buenaventura River question, see the able introduction by Dorothy C. Johansen to HERS XXIII, xxvii-xliv.
241. HBRS IV, 14.
242. HBRS XXIII, 37.
243. Ibid., 3, 7, 8.
244. There are slight discrepancies in the various statements concerning the number of men in the party. For a discussion of this matter, see ibid., Alvin. The number of men on this third expedition was smaller than that on Ogden's previous trips to the Snake Country. The specific reasons for this decline are not entirely clear, but it may be significant that as early as March, 1825, Governor Simpson had decided that the 1824-1825 party was "too numerous," and he suggested that a force "not exceeding Forty strong" would be "easier managed and their services turned to better account." HBRS XIII, 253. In 1829 Simpson said Ogden's party numbered 30 men. HBRS X, 53.
245. HBRS XIII, 265.
246. HBRS XXIII, 3n, 4.
247. In his journal Ogden gives a confusing statement as to when this river was discovered, saying on October 7, 1826, that he was starting "for the River discovered last year (say summer) by Sylvaille." HBRS XXIII, 10. However, there seems no doubt that the find must have been made in the spring or early summer of 1826. See ibid., xl.
248. HBRS XXIII, 18.
249. Ibid., 20.
250. Ibid., 22.
251. Ibid., 26.
252. Ibid., 32.
253. Ibid., 37.
254. Ibid., 41.
255. Ibid., 78.
256. Ibid., 49.
257. Ibid., 49.
258. Ibid., 52.
259. HBRS XXIII, 57.
260. Ibid., 77.
261. Ibid., 84.
262. Ibid., 90.
263. Ibid., 99.
264. Ibid., 100.
265. HBRS IV, 44-45.
266. HBRS XXIII, 101.
267. HBRS IV, 45.
268. HBRS XXIII, 114.
269. HBRS IV, 45.
270. HBRS XXIII, 112.
271. Ibid., 114.
272. Ibid., 115, 116.
273. Ibid., 117.
274. For an example, see HBRS IV, 51.


276. HBRS XXIII, 118.
277. Ibid., 124.
278. Ibid., 134.

279. This account of Ogden's third Snake expedition is based almost entirely on his journal as printed in full in HBRS XXIII, 3-134. An incomplete transcript of this document was edited by T. C. Elliott and published as "Journal of Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Expedition, 1826-7," in OHQ, XI (June, 1910), 201-222.

280. HBRS IV, 49; HBRS XXIII, 134n.
231. HERS X, 53. McLoughlin requested that Ogden's returns be credited to Outfit 1827, but the present writer does not know if the suggestion was adopted. HERS IV, 50.

282. HERS IV, 50.

283. HERS XXIII, lvi, 1344.

284. HERS IV, 50. For a list of the supplies and provisions provided to Ogden from Fort Vancouver on August 18, 1827, see HERS XXVIII, 132-133.


286. This date is found in the first entry in Ogden's journal of the expedition, but the entry was not made until later, probably on September 7. HERS XXVIII, 3. McLoughlin said Ogden left on August 22. McLoughlin to James McMillan Fort Vancouver, October 19, 1827, in HBCA, B.223/b/3, MS, fol. 18d.

287. Same sources as those cited in note 286 immediately above.

288. "HERS XXVIII, 73.

289. HERS III, 1544.

290. HERS XIII, 253.

291. The decision to follow Ross's track was rather strange, since in January, 1827, Ogden had noted in his journal: "the Country Trapped by Mr. Ross three years since may yield a few Beaver but will not give us returns." HERS XXIII, 55. But some weeks later he expressed the view that beaver might be found "towards the Sources of the South Branch [Snake River]." Ibid., 91-92.

292. HERS IV, 564. For more information on this abortive expedition, see HERS X, 152-153; also HERS XXVIII, 362, 1224.

293. HERS IV, 50.

294. McLoughlin to Ogden, Fort Vancouver, August 23, 1827, in HBCA, B.223/b/3, MS, fol. 18. See also McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factor, etc., August 17, 1827, in ibid., fol. 16-16d.

295. HERS XXVIII, 3.

296. Ibid., 6-7.

297. Ibid., 8.

298. Ibid., 10.
299. HBRS XXVIII, 11. The editors of this volume are undoubtedly correct in suggesting that "Day's River" was the John Day River rather than Little Lost River, then also known as "Day's River" or "Day's Defile."

300. Ibid., 17.

301. When these men left camp, Ogden gave their number in his journal as six. Ibid., 19. However, he also said (Ibid.) that his remaining party numbered twelve, and he repeated this number in other entries. Since his total party before the division was given as seventeen, only five men must have left. This deduction is confirmed by his entry for December 11, 1827, in which he says he left five men on the Big Wood. Ibid., 34.

302. Ibid., 22.
303. Ibid., 31.
304. Ibid., 33.
305. Ibid., 38.
306. Ibid., 38, 38n, 41-42, 43-45, 46, 56, 68.
307. Ibid., 39-40.
308. Ibid., 33-34.
309. Ibid., 45-46.
310. Ibid., 64.
311. Ibid., 52. See also pp. 55-56.
312. Ibid., 49.
313. Ibid., 57.
314. Ibid., 49, 53.
315. Ibid., 50.
316. Ibid., 53.
317. Ibid., 60-61.
318. Ibid., 62-65.
319. Ibid., 72.
320. HBRS XXVIII, 72, 72n, 81-32, 91n.
321. Ibid., 91n.
323. HBRS XXVIII, 84.
324. Ibid., 85.
325. Ibid., 88.
326. Ibid., 90.
327. Ibid., 92.
328. HBRS IV, 66.
329. HBRS XXVIII, 94.
330. HBRS IV, 66, 66n.
331. HBRS X, 53.
332. HBRS IV, 66. The two men were Louis LaValle and Baptiste
Spokan, "a slave." Francis Ermatinger, Letters of Francis Ermatinger,
44, typescript in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery,
San Marino, California.
333. HBRS XXVIII, 97.
334. [Peter Skene Ogden], Traits of American Indian Life &
Character, by a Fur Trader (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1933), 8.
335. HBRS IV, 68-70; Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 265-269.
336. HBRS X, 60; Werk, Fur Trade and Empire, 299.
337. Except where otherwise indicated, this account of the
arrival of Smith and his men and of McLoughlin's reaction is based
on HBRS IV, 68-70; Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 268-269, 274.
338. HBRS XXVIII, 97. In 1829 Ogden left Fort Vancouver on or
about August 13, and he is known to have been at Fort Nez Percés by
August 29. Thus it is possible that Ogden left Fort Vancouver in
1828 as late as about September 6. Burt Brown Barker, ed., Letters
of Dr. John McLoughlin . . 1829-1832 (Portland, Oregon: Binfords &
Wort, 1948), 46; John Warren Dease, Memorandum Book, 1829, MS,
entry for August 29, 1829, in Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
Ibid., 6-7. Compare with the more accurate account in Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 239-241.

Smith's hunt in the same region in the spring of 1828 seems not to have been so successful, since he was more interested in getting to the rendezvous than in trapping. Smith had about 1000 beaver at the time of the Umpqua massacre, but it is not clear that they were all gathered during the spring of 1828. HBR S X, 59.

Alice Bay Maloney, in her article, "Peter Skene Ogden's Trapping Expedition to the Gulf of California, 1829-30," in California Historical Society Quarterly, XIX (December, 1940), 308-316, states "It is claimed that Ogden's interest in California streams was due to a desire to reach and trap these waters before American hunters received word of Smith's explorations." Unfortunately, no source for this statement is supplied. See also Alice Bay Maloney, ed., Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura: John Work's California Expedition, 1832-1833... (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1945), xiv. John Scaglione, "Ogden's Report of his 1829-1930 Expedition," in California Historical Society Quarterly, XXVIII (January, 1949, 119, also says that Smith's visit to California aroused Simpson's interests in 1824 project of denuding all the territory south of the Columbia River of every fur-bearing animal." Again, no clear source for this statement is given.

Thirty men and lads, including one Iroquois Indian cook, are named in the reconstructed list of party personnel printed in ibid., 96. Governor Simpson in March, 1829, said the party consisted of 32 men. HBR S X, 53. Ogden himself appears to have counted the number as 29 plus three Indians. HBR S XXVIII, 98-99. For evidence of the presence of families, see ibid., 120, 121.

Little or nothing seems to be known about the activities of this detached party. There is some evidence that Fayette may have come off second best in a brush with Indians on the northern fringe of the Snake Plains east of Wood River in the present Idaho. John Work, The Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831: John Work's Field Journal, ed. by Francis D. Haines, Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 33.
349. HBRS XXVIII, 98-99.
350. Ibid., 107.
351. Ibid., 111.
352. Ibid., 120.
353. Ibid., 121-123.
354. Ibid., 129.
355. Ibid., 138.
356. Ibid., 145.
357. Ibid., 149.
358. Ibid.
359. HBRS IV, 75.
360. HBRS XXVIII, 152-154.
361. Ibid., 164.
362. Ibid., 166.
363. HBRS IV, 74.
364. Ibid., 75.
365. HBRS XXVIII, 166n.
366. HBRS X, 65.
367. Ibid., 63.
369. HBRS X, 50.
370/ Ibid., 64-65.
371. Ibid., 50.
373. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 344-345.
374. HBRS X, 64.

375. Ibid., 50, 55.

376. Ibid., 55-56. The Americans may not have done as badly in the Snake Country as Simpson imagined. See Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 306-308.


378. For a table of comparative prices, see Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 252.


380. Ibid., 309.

381. Ibid., 301.

382. HBRS X, 65.

383. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 309.

384. HBRS X, xlv, 104-106. The date of the wreck is here given as stated in the correspondence of Simpson and McLoughlin. The log of the American brig Owhyhee, which was near the mouth of the river at the time, gives the date as March 11. The difference may possibly be due to the use of sea time for the log. The Owhyhee's log shows that a small portion of the William and Ann's cargo was recovered. F. W. Howay, "The Brig Owhyhee in the Columbia, 1829-30," in OHQ, XXXV (March, 1934), 11.

385. Simpson and McLoughlin gave various dates for the arrival of the Owhyhee, but the vessel's log indicates that the entrance was made on February 22, 1829. Ibid., 10. For the description of the Convoy, see Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 6.

386. HBRS IV, 78; HBRS X, 103.

387. HBRS X, 103-104.

388. Ibid., 113.

389. HBRS IV, 73, 77.

390. HBRS X, 115.

392. Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 34. For proof that Ogden was born in 1790 instead of 1794 as usually stated, see Gloria Griffen Cline, Peter Skene Ogden and the Hudson's Bay Company (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 9.

393. Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 2.

394. HBRs XXVIII, 154.

395. HBRs X, 63-64.

396. HBRs XXVIII, xxxv.

397. Ibid.

398. HBRs X, 52.


400. Ibid., 8-9.

401. HBRs IV, 76-77.


403. Ibid.

404. Deeke, Memorandum Book, 1829, MS, entry for August 29, 1829.


406. Ibid., 52-53, 54-55. See also HBRs XXVIII, 177n.

407. Deese, Memorandum Book, 1829, MS, entry for October 3, 1829.

408. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 56, 61; Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 3.

409. HBRs XXVIII, 177.

410. Ibid., 177n. In his Traits of American Indian Life (p. 3), written many years later, Ogden also said his men were "well appointed."


414. Binns, Peter Skene Ogden, 232. Binns evidently based his statement to this effect upon family documents and tradition not cited in detail.

415. HERS XXVIII, 177. A party of Company trappers was sent to hunt on the north side of Snake River, evidently on the Weiser and Payette Rivers, "late" in 1829 but had disappointing results. It is possible that this group was a part of Ogden's expedition dispatched to make the best of the month required to assemble the horses. Work, The Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831, pp. 12-13. See also OHQ, XIII (December, 1912), 366.

416. HERS XXVIII, 177.

417. Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 3.

418. HERS XXVIII, 177.

419. Ibid., 178; Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 4.

420. Ibid., Traits of American Indian Life, 4.

421. HERS XXVIII, 178.

422. Ibid.; Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 4-5.

423. HERS XXVIII, 178. This view of Ogden's route from Humbolt Sink is espoused by the editors of the volume cited here and by Gloria Cline in her Exploring the Great Basin, 126. These scholars were well acquainted with Great Basin topography. For another view, placing Ogden much farther east, see Scaglione, "Ogden's Report of his 1829-30 Expedition," in California Historical Society Quarterly, XXVIII, 121-122.

424. The basis for the thesis expressed in this paragraph will be found in HERS XXVIII, 178-179 and in the excellent exposition given in note 2, 3, 178, of that work.

425. Ibid., 178.

426. See ibid., 178n; and Robert Glass Cleland, This Reckless Breed of Men: The Trappers and Fur Traders of the Southwest (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 326-327.
427. HBR S XXVIII, 179-180.

428. See ibid., p. 179, note 4, for a detailed discussion of this subject.


430. HBR S XXVIII, p. 179, note 4.

431. Washington Historical Quarterly, I (1907), 262-263.

432. HBR S IV, 86. See also Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 119, 137.

433. For information on the presence of beaver on the Colorado, see Grinnell, Dixon, and Linsdale, Fur-Bearing Mammals, II, 724-727. Other early trappers reported that beaver were numerous along this river; their scarcity in 1830 may have been due to the fact that American hunters such as Ewing Young and Sylvester Pattie had already trapped this stream intensively.

434. Ogden. Traits of American Indian Life. 5-6.

435. For evidence that the Mojaves possessed horses, see Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 238.

436. This account of Ogden's clash with the Indians is based on the only known available source, his Traits of American Indian Life, 5-6, 9-10.

437. HBR S IV, 86.

438. HBR S XXVIII, 180.

439. Tehachapi Pass is favored, for example, by the editors of HBR S XXVIII (p. 180, note 1); and Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 127. Among the advocates of Walker Pass are Harry Laurence Wells, History of Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos Counties, Oregon (Portland, Oregon, 1884), 122; and H. O. Lang, History of the Willamette Valley ... (Portland, Oregon, 1885), 200.

440. HBR S XXVIII, 180.

441. HBR S IV, 86.

442. Dorce B. Nuns, Jr., ed., The Hudson's Bay Company's First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley ... (Sacramento, California: Sacramento Book Collectors Club, 1968), 43.

443. HBR S XXVIII, 180.


446. HBRS XXVIII, 180.

447. For a discussion of this route, see HBRS XIII, p. lvi, note 2.

448. HBRS IV, 86.

449. Source materials made available in recent years now make it clear that Ogden did not return to Walla Walla after a long detour eastward to Great Salt Lake as several historians have assumed to have been possible. For one expression of this possibility see Alice Boy Maloney, "Peter Skene Ogden's Trapping Expedition to the Gulf of California, 1829-30," in California Historical Society Quarterly, XIX (December, 1940), 308-315.

450. Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 80.

451. HBRS XVIII, 161n.

452. Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 82.

453. HBRS IV, 85.

454. Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 83.

455. HBRS XVIII, 175, 181n.

456. HBRS IV, 85-86; HBRS XXVIII, 181.

457. HBRS IV, 85; Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life, 83.

458. HBRS XVIII, 181n.

459. HBRS IV, 86.

460. HBRS XXVIII, 180. For another expression of Ogden's disappointment, see ibid., 176.

461. Simpson to Governor and Committee, July 18, 1831, as quoted in Wunis, First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley, 20.

462. Simpson to Governor and Committee, August 10, 1832, as cited in ibid., 21-22.
463. Simpson to Governor and Committee, August 26, 1830, as quoted in HBRS XXVIII, xxxv.


465. Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 86.


467. Ogden to John McLeod, March 10, 1831, in Washington Historical Quarterly, I, 262-263.


469. Ibid., 136.

470. Ibid., 113.

471. HBRS XXVIII, xxxv.


473. This letter is printed in Ibid., 125-128; and in Work, Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831, 154-157.

474. These numbers are as given in the manuscript copy of Work's Journal in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, HBCA, B.202/e/9 and B.202/e/10. In his personal copy, Work gave the total number as 115, but he included himself.


477. Ibid., 82.

478. Ibid., 94.

479. Ibid., 95.

480. Ibid., 96-97. For a somewhat different account of this confrontation, with confirmation of the fact that a disaster was very close, see W. A. Ferris, Life in the Rocky Mountains . . ., ed. by Paul C. Phillips (Denver: The Old West Publishing Company, 1940), 78.


482. Ibid., 122.


496. Ibid., 205, 210. Since McLoughlin did not believe McGillivray could supply "one hundred and thirty two" horses, he asked Chief Trader Heron at Fort Colville to assist in gathering any deficit number. Heron was also requested to provide a listed number of leather items -- saddles, apaches, pack cords, etc. *Ibid.*, 205-207.

500. Ibid., 93.

501. Ibid., 78-79a.

502. Ibid., 93.
507. Queen's wife, Mosette, was along on the trip, but she was a Spokane mixed blood and thus not the "house-keeper" in question. A male Walla Walla Indian who was wounded during the battle died on February 2; he undoubtedly was the housekeeper.

514. Yankee Fork Herald (Bonanza City, Idaho), November 22, 1879, p. 1, col. 5; p. 4, cols. 1-2.


516. The editors of Work's journal believe that Work left Stanley Basin by way of Meadow Creek, crossing the ridge and descending Trail Creek to the South Fork of the Fayette. *Ibid.*, 160-161. However, the rugged range in that vicinity cannot be reconciled with Work's "little height of land." The route given in the text above corresponds to the opinion of Dr. Merle Wells, dean of Idaho historians.


518. Except where otherwise indicated, this account of Work's 1831-1832 expedition is based on his *Journal*, as cited above.
522. McLoughlin also neglected to tell Governor Simpson of this violation of Company policy. McLoughlin to Simpson, Fort Vancouver, September 12, 1832, in HBCA, B.223/b/6, MS, fols. 13d-17.

525. Ibid., 279.
526. Ibid., 283.

528. Work, Fur Brigade, 1, 106.
531. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 89.


534. Work, Fur Brigade, 9, 106.
535. Ibid., 11.
536. Ibid., 16.
537. Ibid.
538. Ibid., 20.
539. Ibid., 24.
540. Ibid., 31.
541. Ibid., 36.
542. Ibid., 38.
543. Ibid., 39.
544. Ibid., 56.
545. Ibid., 60.
546. Work, Fur Brigade, 63.
547. Ibid., 66.
548. Ibid., 67.
549. Ibid.
550. Ibid., 72.
551. Ibid., 74-75.
552. Ibid., 77.
553. Ibid., 76-77.
554. Ibid., 79.
555. Ibid., 81.
556. Ibid., 83. Except where otherwise indicated, the account of the 1832-1833 Snake Expedition is based on Work, Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura.
557. HBCA IV, 111.
559. McLoughlin to Duncan Finlayson, Fort Vancouver, April 6, 1834, in HBCA, B.223/b/10, MS, fols. 3-3d.
561. HBCA IV, xcv.
562. John McLeod, Journals and Correspondence of John McLeod, Senior, 8-8, typescript, 183-184, in Oregon Historical Society, Portland.
563. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 173.
564. Work, Journal, 59. The journal of this trip is printed in OHQ, XXIV (September, 1923), 233-268.
566. McLoughlin to Finlayson, April 6, 1834, in HBCA, B.223/b/10, MS, fols. 3-3d.
567. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 280; McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 150.

568. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 161, 164n.


570. Ibid., xcvii; McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 161.

571. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 161, 166.

572. Good summaries of activities in the Snake Country after 1833 can be found in HBRs IV, xciv-xcvii, xcvii-xciii; and John S. Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 101-110.

573. Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 95.

574. Fort Vancouver, Fur trade Returns ..., MS, in Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C. (hereafter cited as PABC).

575. OHQ, XXXV, 121.


578. Ibid., 267.

579. Ibid., 124, 135.

580. HBRs IV, 347.

581. HBRs XIII, 259n; Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 253.

582. HBRs IV, 10-11; HBRs XIII, 97n; HBRs XXIII, xxxii-xxxiv.

See HBRs XIII, 258-259, for McLoughlin's instructions.

583. HBRs XXIII, xxxiv-xxxv.

584. For an example, see ibid., xliv.

585. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 274.

586. HBRs IV, 33.

587. HBRs XXIII, 220.
588. HBRS IV, 30; HBRS XXIII, 148.

589. HBRS XXIII, 143, 148-149.

590. Ibid., 149.

591. Ibid., 159.

592. Ibid., 162.

593. This account of McLeod's first Umpqua expedition is based almost entirely on his journal published in *Ibid.*, 143-174.

594. HBRS IV, 30; HBRS XXIII, 174; Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 290.

595. HBRS XXIII, 220.

596. Ibid., 175.

597. Ibid., 177.

598. This account of McLeod's 1826-1827 trip is based on his journal printed in HBRS XXIII, 175-219.

599. Ibid., 219n.


604. HBRS IV, 66.

605. Ibid., 173.

606. Ibid., 68-70.

607. Barker, *Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin*, 77; Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., *The Hudson's Bay Company's First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley: Alexander McLeod's 1829 Hunt* (Sacramento, California: The Sacramento Book Collectors Club, 1968), 10, 27. Where these two sources are not in agreement, the first has been followed here.
608. HBRS IV, 70.

609. McLoughlin to McLeod, Fort Vancouver, 6th [sic] August, 1828, in HBCA, B.223/b/4, MS, fols. 17-27d. This letter could not have been written on August 6, since it was written after the arrival of Smith at Fort Vancouver.


611. Ibid.

612. Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, 303.


614. For the journal of this portion of McLeod's expedition, see Ibid., 112-135.

615. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 73.

616. HBRS X, 62-64.

617. Except where otherwise indicated, this account of McLeod's 1828-1829, expedition is based on his report printed in Nunis, First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley, 31-43.

618. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 73.

619. This controversy is well presented in Nunis, First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley, 16-18.


621. HBRS IV, 86.


624. HBRS IV, 87.

625. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 187. McLeod's family seems to have gone East the previous fall. Ibid., 87.


627. Ibid., 21-22.

628. HBRS IV, 86.
629. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 152.
630. Ibid., 177.
631. Ibid., 187-188.
632. Ibid., 266-269.
633. Ibid., 270-272, 274, 293, 295.
635. Ibid., 52.
636. HBRS IV, 111-112. Laframboise seems to have told McLoughlin that he went up the coast as far as "McLeods of Toutanie [?] River" before turning inland. McLoughlin to Francis Heron, July 20, 1833, in HBCA, B.223/b/9, MS, fols. 154-16. Evidently this stream was the present Rogue River. But on September 13, 1833, Work came across Laframboise's homeward track on the Klamath River near Mount Shasta!  Work, Fur Brigade, 77.
638. HBRS IV, 112. McLoughlin seems to have forgotten that McLeod had also reported: "The Country that we have hunted has been drained of Beaver and to make another hunt [we] would have to select other hunting grounds." Nunis, First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley, 43.
641. OHQ, XXIV (September, 1923), 253, 255-256, 258; McLoughlin to John Work, Fort Vancouver, May 21, 1834, in HBCA, B.223/b/10, MS, fol. 11.
643. HBRS IV, 156n.
645. HBCA. B.223/c/1, fols. 46-48d.

646. HBRS IV, 156-157. In another letter McLoughlin gave the date of Laframboise's arrival as May 10. HBCA, B.223/b/15, fols. 37d-38.

647. McLoughlin to Simpson, Fort Vancouver, September 5, 1836, in *ibid.*; Nunis, "Michel Laframboise," 156. On another occasion McLoughlin said the party numbered 25 men and was sent to hunt "South of the Umpqua." HBCA, B.223/b/15, MS, fols. 74d-78d.

648. McLoughlin to Governor Simpson, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders, Fort Vancouver, August 30, 1837, in HBCA, B.223/b/17, MS, fols. 31-32d; Nunis, "Michel Laframboise," 156; HBRS IV, 202. From the last reference it would appear that Laframboise remained out during the winter and may even have been in California at that season.

649. HBRS IV, 279.


651. For the "many dangers" quotation, see HBCA, B.223/b/22, MS, fols. 19d-20. The July 8 date is also from this source and seems more accurate than the July 9 he recalled on a later occasion.

652. This account of Laframboise's expedition to this point is largely based on HBRS IV, 251-254.

653. Douglass to Laframboise, Fort Vancouver, July 17, 1838, in HBCA, B.223/b/22, MS, fols. 21d-22; Douglass to Chief Factors and Chief Traders, September 1, 1838, in *ibid.*, fols. 25d-26.

654. HBRS IV, 288-290. See also Nunis, "Michel Laframboise," 159-161.

655. HBRS VI, 217-219; Nunis, "Michel Laframboise," p. 163, note 60; James Douglass to J. B. Alvarado, Fort Vancouver, July 9, 1839, in HBCA, B.223/b/24, MS, fols. 26-26d.

656. Douglass to Rambrun, Fort Vancouver, April 30, 1839, in HBCA, B.223/b/24, MS, fols. 11-11d.

657. HBRS VI, 25n.

658. Douglass to Alvarado, July 9, 1839, in HBCA, B.223/b/24, MS, fols. 26-26d.


661. HBRS VI, 220.

662. Ibid., 25n; McLoughlin to James M. Yale, Fort Vancouver, July 6, 1840, in HBCA, B.223/b/27, MS, fol. 26.

663. HBCA, D.5/5, MS, fol. 119b.


665. McLoughlin to Laframboise, Fort Vancouver, September 14, 1840, in HBCA, B.223/b/27, MS, fol. 39d.

666. Ibid.; HBRS VI, 25.

667. George Foster Emmons, Journal Kept While Attached to the South Sea Surveying & Exploring Expedition ..., MS, III, entry for October 16, 1841, in Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.


669. HBRS VI, 25f. Apparently these are the final figures. Governor Simpson, when he was at Fort Vancouver in November, 1841, estimated the 1840-1841 "Buenaventura trapping expedition" brought back "about 1200 beaver and otter" derived principally "within tide range from the Bay of San Francisco." He believed the profits of these "indifferent hunts" amounted to only "about £350." Glyndwr Williams, ed., London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson, 1841-42 (Publications of the Hudson's Bay Record Society, vol. XXIX, London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1973) (hereafter cited as HBRS XXIX), 77.

670. HBRS VI, 233. See also Nunnis, "Michel Laframboise," 165-167.

671. Emmons, Journal, MS, III, entries for September 5, 10; October 26, 1841.

672. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 24.

673. Ibid., 236-237, 241; HBRS VII, 30.

674. HBRS VI, 251-252, 256, 257.

675. Ibid., 257-258.

676. HBRS XXIX, 58.

677. Ibid., 33.

678. Ibid., 60.

680. Ibid., 237; HBRS VI, 314; HBRS XXIX, 74 (Simpson returns to Fort Vancouver from NW Coast and Sitka); George Simpson, An Overland Journey Round the World . . . (2 vols. in 1, Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1847), I, 193 (Ermatinger left "about the time of our return from Sitka). One reason for Ermatinger's late start was the need to first close his Snake Country accounts.


685. Dillon, Siskiyou Trail, 356.


687. HBRS XXIX, 118.

688. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 252. For more on Ermatinger's visit to San Francisco, see Dillon, Siskiyou Trail, 244-245.

689. HBRS VI, 267, 279; HBRS XXIX, 117.

690. HBRS XXIX, 77.

691. Ibid., 119.


693. Simpson to McLoughlin, Red River, June 21, 1843, in HBCA, B.223/c/1, MS, fols. 197-197d; HBRS VI, 81-82, 314-315.

694. HBRS VI, 81.

695. Ibid., 267-268.

696. Ibid., 275, 279, 284, 286-287.

697. Ibid., 123.

698. Ibid., 258.

700. McDonald, Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 247-249; HBRS VI, 160.

701. OHQ, XVII (September, 1916), 223.

702. HBCA, B.223/d/161, MS, p. 73.

703. HBRS VI, 123.

704. HBRS XXIX, 119n. In a letter of July 4, 1844, McLoughlin stated that the party left San Francisco in May, 1843. HBRS VI, 194.

705. HBRS VI, 123.

706. OHQ, XVII, 223. In another place in the same letter McLoughlin seems to indicate that the gain was only £31.18.0. Ibid., 238.

707. Ibid., 223. At its meeting on June 10, 1843, the Council of the Northern Department, with Governor Simpson present, had designated Laframboise to head the "Buena Ventura" expedition for Outfit 1843, but it appears this appointment was refused. Cowie, "Minutes of Council," 833.

708. HBRS VII, xxvii. It is sometimes said that Laframboise did not retire until 1845, but personnel records for Outfit 1843 mention him only as a Willamette "settler" with a debt of £79.15.0. HBCA, B.223/g/8, MS, p. 2.

709. HBRS VI, 123.

710. HBCA, B.239/1/14, MS, p. 53.

711. HBRS VI, 194.

712. Fort Vancouver, Fur Trade Returns, MS, in Public Archives of British Columbia, Victoria.

713. OHQ, XVII, 238.

714. HBRS VI, 120, 123, 298.

715. HBCA, B.239/1/14, MS, p. 53.

716. HBRS X, 233-237.

This distinction was not continuous, at least in the personnel records, which are the only ones which have been examined in their entirety for the present study. For certain years the Southern Party personnel were lumped in with the personnel of the Fort Vancouver Indian Trade; for at least one year (Outfit 1833) neither expedition was listed separately, the Snake Party employees being included with those of Fort Colville. This may have been the case with the Snake Party for one or two other years also.

"Agrés" was a voyageur term for "outfit," and it was also applied to the equipment of canoes and boats. Malcolm McLeod, ed., Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific ... 1828 (Ottawa, 1872), 44.

For these topics, see HBRS XXIII, 144-150; OHQ, 240-242; Sullivan, Travels of Jedediah Smith, 113; Charles Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842 (5 vols., Philadelphia, 1845), V, 218.
735. *HERS X*, 51.


737. For an example of a call upon Colville for Southern Party horses, see *ibid.*, 113.

738. *HERS XXVIII*, 22, 22n.

739. *HERS XXIII*, 147.


742. *ibid.*

743. For detailed lists of the "outfits" issued to two Snake expeditions, see *HERS XXIII*, 227-234; *HERS XXVIII*, 182-188.

744. *HERS XXIII*, 177.


749. *HERS XXVIII*, 22.


751. For example, see *HERS XXIII*, 230.

752. For definitions of the various ranks of boatmen, see Barker, *Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin*, 334-335.

753. *HERS XXIII*, 4n; Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 290.


756. *HERS XXVIII*, 33.
757. Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin, 199.
758. HBRS XXIII, 37n.
759. HBCA, R.223/b/22, MS, fols. 9d-11.
760. HBRS XXIII, 72.
761. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 208.
762. HBRS XXIII, 72.
763. HBRS XXIII, 32.
764. HBRS XXIII, 72.
765. Ibid., 167-168.
766. Ibid., 229.
768. HBRS XXIII, 148.
769. Ibid., 22.
771. HBRS XXIII, 120.
772. Ibid., 162.
773. For evidence of the use of a 12-ell tent, see HBRS, XXIII, 230.
774. Work, Fur Brigade, 2.
775. HBRS XXIII, 60.
776. For example, see Work, Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831, 59.
777. Work, Fur Brigade, 49.
778. For a description of the lodges used by the Snake parties, see John Kirk Townsend, Narrative of a Journey across the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 115.
779. In 1827 at his winter camp on Snake River, Ogden spoke of his "leather hut." HBRS XXVIII, 32.

780. For John Work's list of the messes in his 1832-1833 party, see Work, Fur Brigade, 99-103.

781. For example, see HBRS XXVIII, 96.

782. Dunn, The Oregon Territory, 222-223.


784. HBRS XXVIII, 181. Incidentally, expedition leaders had to share their rations with their cooks, guides, and other personal attendants, if any.

785. Work, Fur Trade and Empire, 356. For the full text of Slacum's report a convenient source is ORQ XIII (June, 1912), 175-224.

786. For example, see the opinion of Ross, in his Fur Hunters of the Far West, 209.


788. Townsend, Narrative, 115.

789. HBRS XXIII, 144-147.

790. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 209.

791. HBRS XXVIII, 9.


793. Townsend, Narrative, 116.

794. HBRS XXIII, 5.


800. British and American Joint Commission for the Final Settlement of the Claims of the Hudson's Bay and Puget's Sound Agricultural Companies, [Papers] (14 vols., Washington; Montreal, 1865-1869), [VIII], 64.


806. *XXIII*, 155.


809. *OHQ XIV*, 376.


818. Ross to Orden, October 14, 1824, in HBCA, B.202/a/1, MS, as quoted in Cline, Exploring the Great Basin, 100.

819. HBRs XXIII, 18.
820. HBRs.XIII, lxvi-lxvii.
821. HBRs XXIII, 32.
822. Ibid., 84.
823. Ibid., 161.
824. Ibid., 40.
825. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 283.
826. Townsend, Narrative, 119.
827. Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West, 283.
828. HBCA, B.233/c/1, MS, fol. 21.
829. HBRs XXIII, 65.
831. Work, Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831, 75.
832. HBRs XXVIII, 62.
834. Ibid., 282.
835. HBRs XXIII, 106-107.
836. Ibid., 77.
837. For examples of theses procedures, see Ibid., 128, 129.
839. Ibid.

342. Fort Vancouver, Fur Returns, MS.


344. The present writer has as yet found no detailed description of specific trapping techniques employed by Hudson's Bay Company trappers, but although there were certain variations, all of the mountain men in the Far West used the same general method. There are a number of good accounts of the practices of the American beaver hunters, a sampling of which are listed in Carl J. Russell, Firearms, Traps, & Tools of the Mountain Men (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 145ff. The above account is based mainly on that work, pp. 102, 144-150; Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, II, 809-810; and Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 43-44.

345. HBRSS XXIII, 71.

346. Ibid., 72.

347. Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, II, 810; Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 43.


349. HBRSS XXIII, 30.

350. Ibid., 76.


352. This account of the skinning and dressing of beaver is based largely on Russell, Firearms, Traps, & Tools, 150-154.

353. Morgan, Jedediah Smith, 44.


355. Except where otherwise indicated, this account of making packs in based on Russell, Firearms, Traps, & Tools, 156-157.

356. For a description of these presses, see ibid., 156-159.

357. HBRSS XXIII, 106.


870. HBRS XXIII, 73-74.


877. Ibid., 41.


881. HBRS XXVIII, 134, 138. On the use of rum in the Snake Country, see ibid., 54-552.
882. HBRs XXVIII, 54.
883. HBRs VI, 29.
884. HBRs XXVIII, 44.
885. HBRs XXIII, 94. Punctuation has been added to the quotation as transcribed above.