



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada



YORK BOATS & BUFFALO ROBES



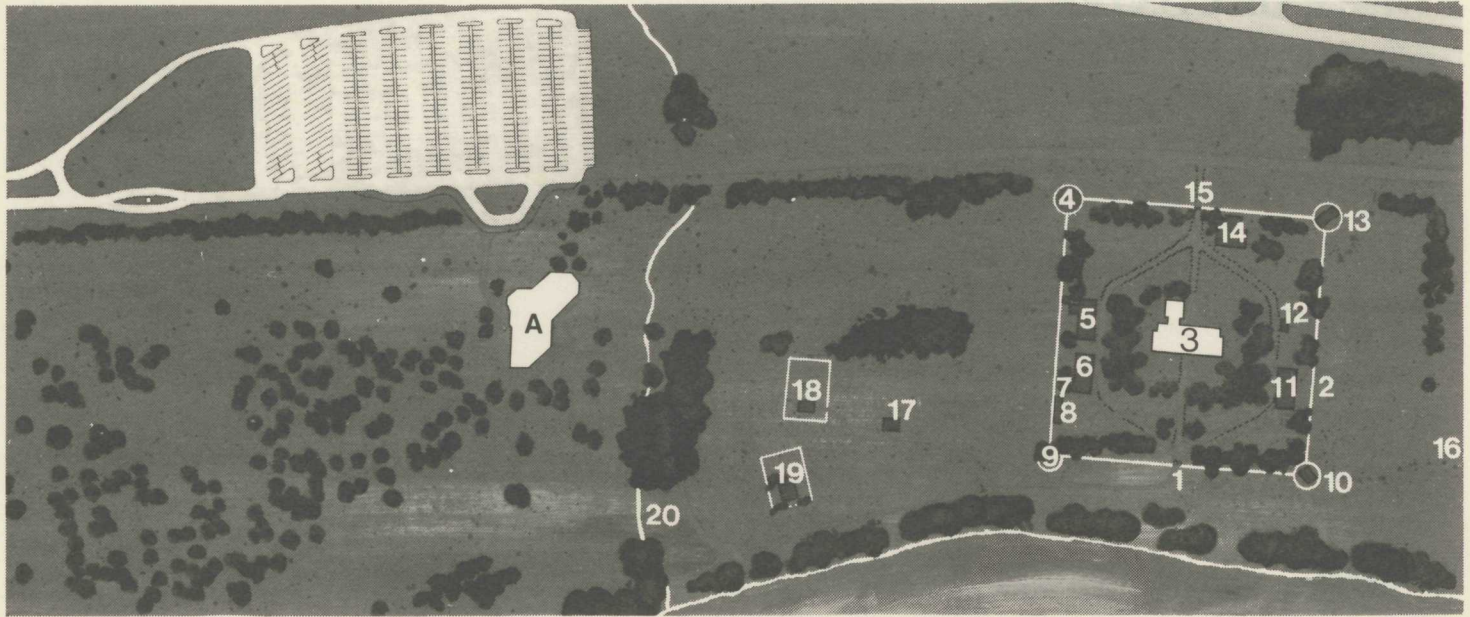
Fur Trade Life At Lower Fort Garry

Welcome to Lower Fort Garry! This national historic park was once part of the far-flung network of fur trade posts built by the Hudson's Bay Company across North America. It has been carefully restored and now resembles the fort as it might have appeared during the mid-19th century. Look around, explore, and use this booklet to help you understand a way of life much different from your own.

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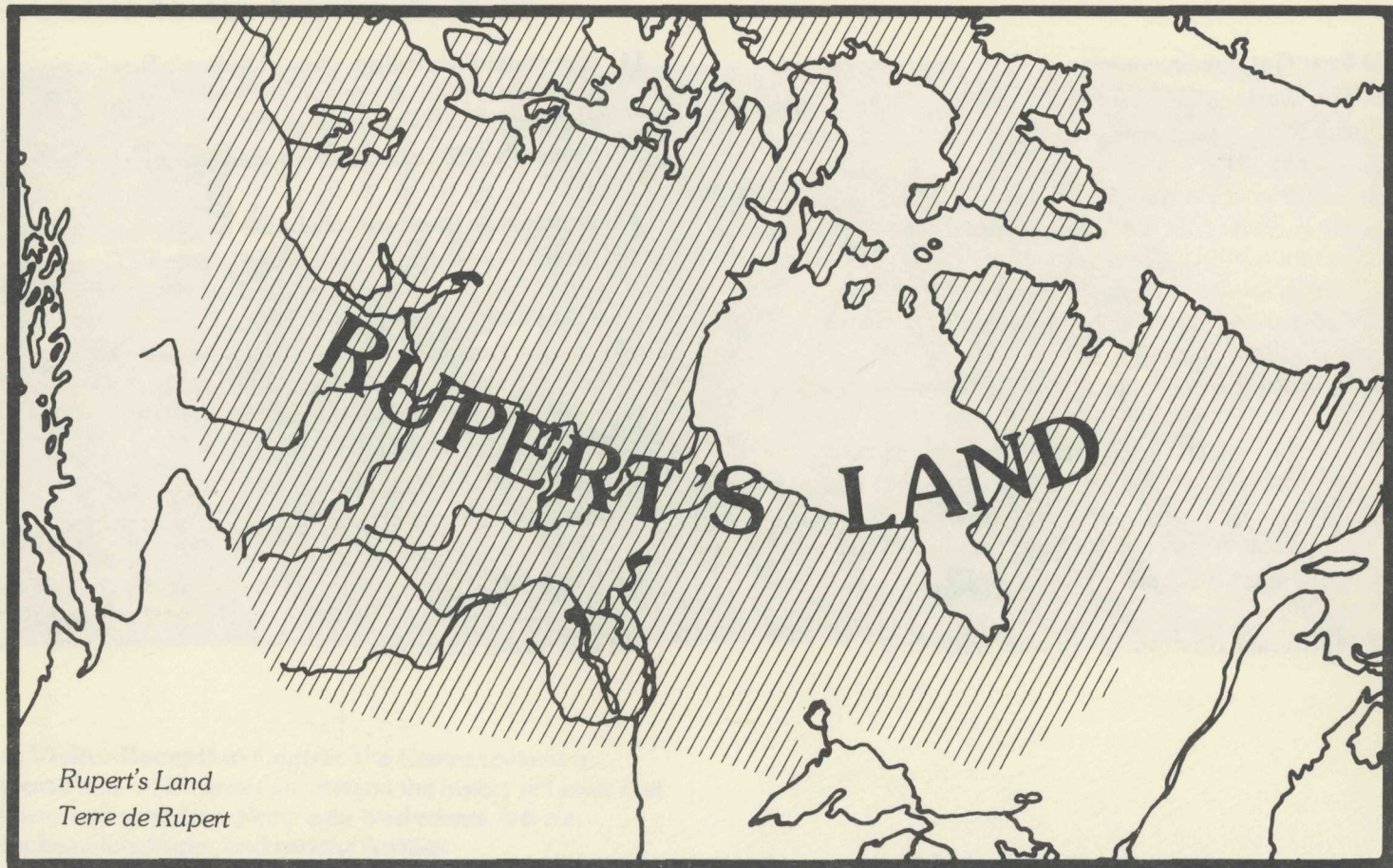
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A Guide to our Fur Trade Post



A. Visitor Reception Centre: The Centre contains a theatre and exhibit area that interpret the history of Lower Fort Garry, and provides a picnic area, washrooms, first-aid, enclosed lunch area, and parking facilities.

- 1) **East Gate:** main entrance
- 2) **The Walls**
- 3) **Big House:** Governor's residence built in 1830; now restored to the 1850's.
- 4) **Southwest Bastion:** wash-house and cookhouse for the 6th Regiment of Foot (1846 - 1848); later a Company storehouse.
- 5) **Retail Store:** reconstruction of an 1875 Company store; today it contains the Hudson's Bay Company Collection.
- 6) **Furloft - Salesshop:** built in 1832; restored to the mid 1860's.
- 7) **Red River Cart:** a two wheeled wooden cart pulled by ox or horse.
- 8) **York Boats:** boats built by the Company; designed to carry heavy freight and navigate inland water routes.
- 9) **Southeast Bastion:** ice house. Today - public washrooms.
- 10) **Northeast Bastion:** gunpowder magazine.
- 11) **Warehouse Building:** stored Hudson's Bay Company goods; later used as a prison and asylum; now restored to the mid 1860's as a warehouse.
- 12) **Doctor's Office:** original wooden structure built in 1885.
- 13) **Northwest Bastion:** bakehouse for hardtack biscuits.
- 14) **Men's House:** residence built in 1850's for Company employees; today - south side restored as Men's House; north side - craft displays.
- 15) **Indian Treaty No. 1:** commemorates the treaty signed in 1871 between the Ojibwa and Swampy Cree Indians and the Canadian Government.
- 16) **Agricultural Complex**
- 17) **Blacksmith Shop:** reconstructed to the 1870's.
- 18) **Settler's Home:** original wooden home from the 1830's.
- 19) **Engineer's Cottage:** built in the late 1830's; restored to the 1870's when a Company steam engineer lived here.
- 20) **Industrial Complex**



Rupert's Land
Terre de Rupert

INTRODUCTION

In 1826 a severe flood destroyed Fort Garry at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, (now Central Winnipeg). To replace it, the Hudson's Bay Company built Lower Fort Garry 32 km north of the forks and below the dangerous St. Andrew's Rapids. The fort became an important centre for supplying goods to northern fur trade posts and packing furs for shipment to York Factory and England through Hudson Bay. Later the fort became the site of the most successful farm in what was then called Rupert's Land: a vast area which today covers the prairie provinces and the Northwest Territories. The fort was built from large limestone blocks. Construction began in 1830 and by the end of the decade the Governor's house, the warehouse, and the furloft-salesshop building were completed.

From 1846-1848 British troops were posted at Lower Fort Garry to protect Hudson's Bay Company interests in Rupert's Land from the threat of American expansion and to control local Metis unrest. It proved to be a tranquil stay, and to keep busy the soldiers completed the construction of the fort's walls and bastions. It is important to remember **there was never a battle fought at Lower Fort Garry.**

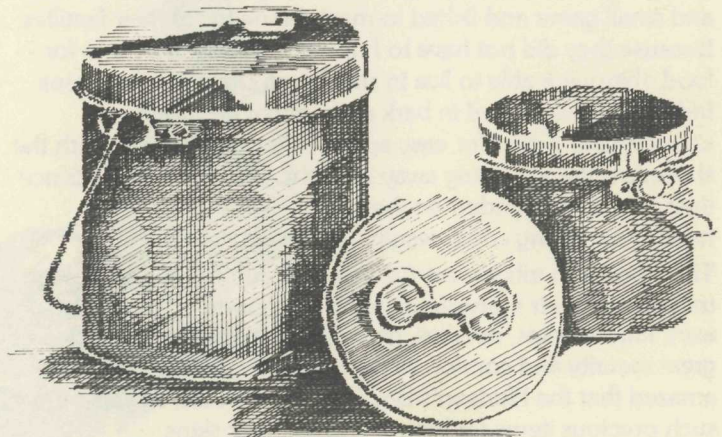
NATIVE PEOPLE

Indian tribes occupied the plains and woodlands of Rupert's Land. The tribes had different names and customs, but all depended on hunting and fishing for survival.

PLAINS TRIBES

Indian people such as the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, and Sioux lived on the vast grass covered plains. They used lances and bows and arrows to hunt the plentiful buffalo and antelope which provided most of their food. The men of the tribe hunted; the women butchered the game and dressed the hides. An Indian child learned the skills of his tribe by playing games which imitated the adults at work.

During the 18th century the plains Indians acquired two things which greatly changed their way of life. They traded or stole horses from the tribes to the south, and obtained firearms from European traders in the north and east. Using the horse, the tribes now hunted and travelled farther and faster than had ever been thought possible. The **musket** made hunting



Hudson's Bay Company copper kettles

easier and changed the Indian idea of warfare. Rawhide armour, shields, lances, and bows and arrows proved to be no match for this powerful new weapon.

It was a period of great unrest. Some tribes had horses; others had guns; some had both. Raiding parties penetrated deep into enemy territory and major battles took place. During these unsettled times tribal boundaries changed a great deal. Things became even more complicated as woodland groups moved onto the plains and became involved in the competition.

By the 19th century all tribes had obtained enough guns and horses to protect themselves and tribal areas had become more firmly established.

WOODLAND TRIBES

The Cree and Ojibwa, living in the woodlands, hunted moose and small game and fished to meet the needs of their families. Because they did not have to hunt large herds of buffalo for food, they were able to live in smaller groups than the plains Indians. Families lived in bark and animal hide shelters, situated near a river for easy access to food and water, with the shelter's entrance facing away from the cold north wind. Since their survival depended on the bounty of the land, poor hunting or fishing could result in *famine*.

The woodland tribes were the first to encounter the European traders and their marvellous new trade goods. These metal axes, knives, traps, needles, glass beads, and firearms added great security and comfort to the Indian families. They were amazed that the Hudson's Bay Company would exchange such precious items for beaver and muskrat skins.

The Cree became the middlemen of the fur trade. No strangers to trading, they quickly adopted the new system and lost no time in taking advantage of their location between the inland tribes and the traders on the coast. They carried furs from the more remote tribes to Hudson Bay and returned with trade goods. Naturally they charged a price.

When the traders moved inland this monopoly ended. Many of the middlemen were forced to return to trapping to obtain the goods they needed. Others moved onto the plains, hunting buffalo and exchanging the meat and robes for the necessary trade goods.

In addition to the smoked skins, Indians made other clothing from wool and cotton cloth purchased at the H.B.C. saleshop. Articles of clothing were often decorated with colourful glass beads, silk threads, or dyed porcupine quills. Severe winters demanded warm clothing from head to toe to protect the native hunters and their families.

Indian hunters travelled on snowshoes during the winter. In summer the plains tribes travelled on horseback, while the woodland tribes moved on foot or in birchbark canoes.

The native people were extremely important to the Hudson's Bay Company. They supplied most of the furs to the Company and in the early years taught the Europeans how to survive in the harsh climate of Rupert's Land.

TRADE

People of the lower Red River settlement, natives with furs or settlers' wives with garden produce, travelled to the Lower Fort Garry saleshop to exchange their goods for items sold in the Company store. There was little money in Red River, so to obtain the many things they could not make themselves, people had to trade.

This trade or **barter** system would begin when a customer, possibly a trapper, came to Lower Fort Garry with his **pelts** to trade for his family's supplies. He would enter the office in the furloft building and present his furs to the clerk, who would check their quality and tell the trapper how much he thought they were worth. Often there would be disagreements, and the

trapper and the clerk would barter until they arrived at a price which would satisfy both the trapper and the Hudson's Bay Company. Having settled upon an amount, the clerk would record the agreement in his ledger. Little cash was kept in the store. The clerk would give the customer a token or **tally stick** to represent the worth of his furs. With these sticks the trapper was able to go into the saleshop and buy his supplies.

Bartering for wares at the Hudson's Bay Company store, as well as trading with neighbours for common items such as soap and candles, gave the settlers of Red River a small market for selling goods and obtaining necessities.



Settling on a price

Arrivons-en à un prix

FURS

The Hudson's Bay Company explored Rupert's Land and built a network of trading posts for two purposes: to obtain valuable furs, and with hopes of discovering the North-west Passage to the Orient. From the beginning the beaver was trapped to make expensive beaver hats. Later fox, lynx, coyote, wolf, mink, marten, muskrat, and even skunk were used to make fashionable collars and coats.

The animals were trapped in the winter when the hair on the pelts was longest and thickest. They were caught with various types of traps and bait. Once trapped, the animals were skinned in one of two ways: open or cased. In open skinning, the hide was slit down the belly from chin to tail and the skin peeled off. With case skinning, the pelts were removed by slitting across the tail and legs of the animals, and pulling the fur down over the animal's head, much like taking off a pull-over sweater.

The winter harvest of furs was brought to the furloft building to be tightly baled with a fur press and labelled. A number of loose pelts were wrapped in either a buffalo or bear robe and put in the press, which was then tightened until the bundle could be tied into a 90 - 110 pound bale. In this form, the fur bales were easier to ship and, hopefully, waterproof.

TRANSPORTATION

In an age before automobiles or airplanes, travel by boat through the lakes and rivers of Rupert's Land was the most

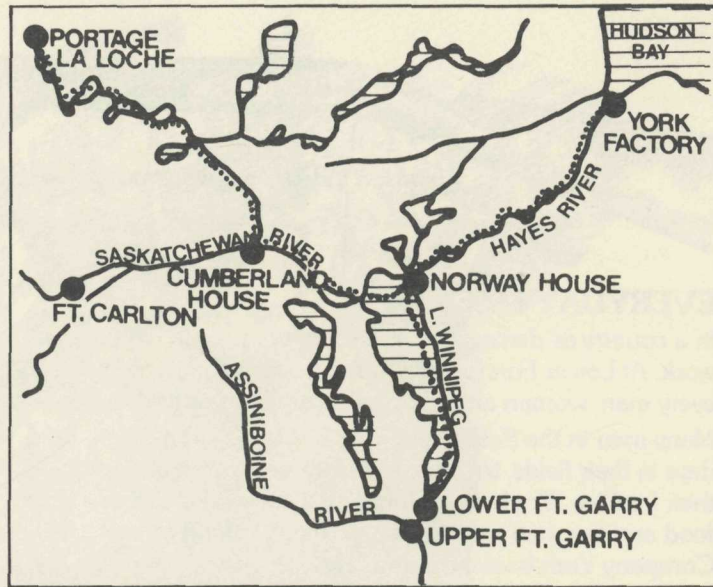


*Metis freighter and Red River cart
Vapeur métis et charrette de la rivière Rouge*

common form of transportation. The greatest number of furs came from the western part of Rupert's Land, and the Hudson's Bay Company built large **York boats** to carry goods to the farthest corners of its territory. Nine men to a boat and nine boats to a **brigade**, they carried supplies from Lower Fort Garry to Norway House, and then on to Portage la Loche in what is today northwestern Saskatchewan. There the boats picked up pelts from the fur-rich Athabasca country and continued on to York Factory on Hudson Bay, where great ships carried the furs to England to be made into goods for sale.

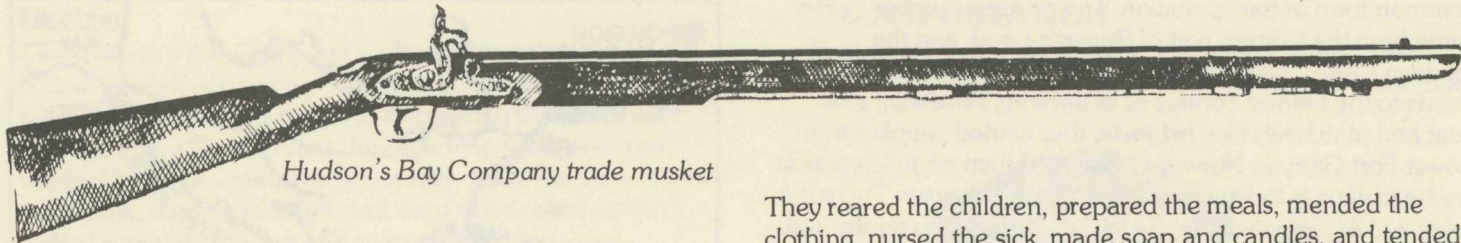
Although the brigades set out in the spring, their labour was only half finished when they arrived at York Factory in late summer. The English ships brought all the goods needed by the fur trading posts of Rupert's Land for the following year. It was now the job of the York boat **tripmen** to load up these goods and return home from Hudson Bay before winter freeze-up closed the water highways.

Another important means of transportation was the **Red River Cart**. Built by the settlers for hunting and travel, the sturdily constructed cart was used in all weather and seasons. By 1860 the Company was using many ox carts to transport trade goods from St. Paul, Minnesota to the **Red River Settlement**. The boat trip from York Factory had proved to be too long and costly, so goods were shipped from England to Montreal and then by rail to St. Paul.



York boat routes of Rupert's Land

Winter conditions demanded the use of other forms of transportation such as the **freight carriole** pulled by horses and dog sleds. Trappers often travelled on snowshoes. Winter travel required skill and a knowledge of the country: one mistake could mean the difference between reaching a destination or freezing to death.



Hudson's Bay Company trade musket

EVERYDAY LIFE

In a country as demanding as Rupert's Land no one escaped work. At Lower Fort Garry and the surrounding settlement, every man, woman and child had daily **chores** to do.

Many men in the Settlement were farmers, working long hard days in their fields, tending to their animals, and caring for their families. The buffalo hunt and fishing provided additional food and the men earned extra money working on the Company York boat or ox cart brigades.

For the men of the Hudson's Bay Company there was a variety of work to be done. The officers, like the Governor, spent their days tending to the Company business. There were reports to be written to London, trade goods to be examined for proper quality and problems to be solved at the various fur posts throughout Rupert's Land. For the servants, work could vary from chopping wood to preparing the York boats for the spring journey to Portage la Loche.

Most Red River women worked as hard as the men. They toiled in the fields planting and harvesting, as well as taking care of the children and meeting the many household needs.

They reared the children, prepared the meals, mended the clothing, nursed the sick, made soap and candles, and tended the gardens.

Life was not as demanding for the wives of the Hudson's Bay Company officers. Women like the Governor's wife had **servants** to perform the daily tasks, allowing time to entertain Hudson's Bay Company officials and guests.

When they were old enough, most children worked in the fields with their fathers or helped in the home with their mothers. On Sunday work would stop and the families would attend one of the many churches in Red River. The churches operated a number of schools in the Settlement, but only a few students received more than a basic education. More fortunate boys had the opportunity to go to Upper Canada or England to obtain a higher education.

Most boys followed in the steps of their fathers, farming along the banks of the Red River, while the girls married young and reared families as their mothers had done.

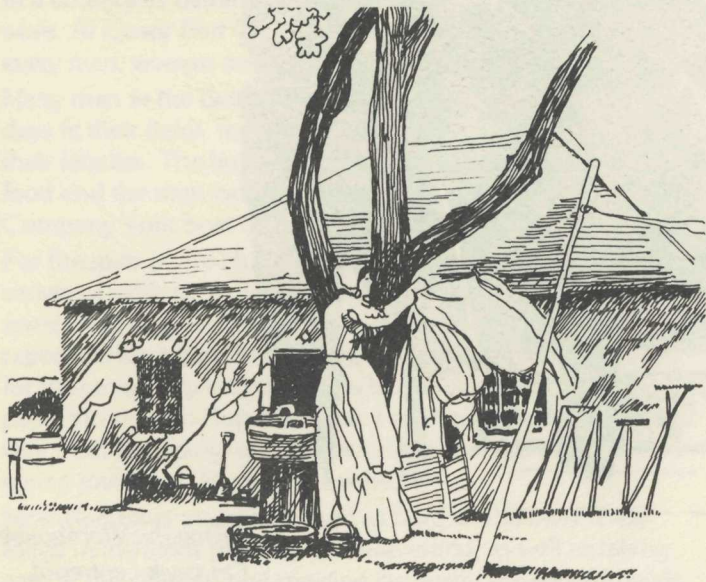


*Filling the Warehouse
On stock l'entrepôt*

SUPPLY

By the 1850's Upper Fort Garry had become the main fur trade centre in Red River. The Lower Fort continued to store furs, but a large farm was established west of the fort to provide the northern fur posts with food and supplies. Cattle, pigs, and sheep were raised, and wheat, barley, oats, hay and a variety of kitchen vegetables were grown in the fields.

The Lower Fort remained very important to the people of the lower Red River Settlement. They made pemmican, butter, candles, soap and even brooms to exchange for goods such as



blankets, cast iron pots, window glass, dishes, muskets, gun powder, and other assorted items.

While at the Fort, the settlers would often ask for help from the blacksmith, one of the most important craftsmen in the Settlement. Although he worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, the blacksmith would help mend a broken tool or make a needed piece of equipment for a settler or trapper. In a settlement as isolated as Red River it was important that people helped one another.

PASTIMES

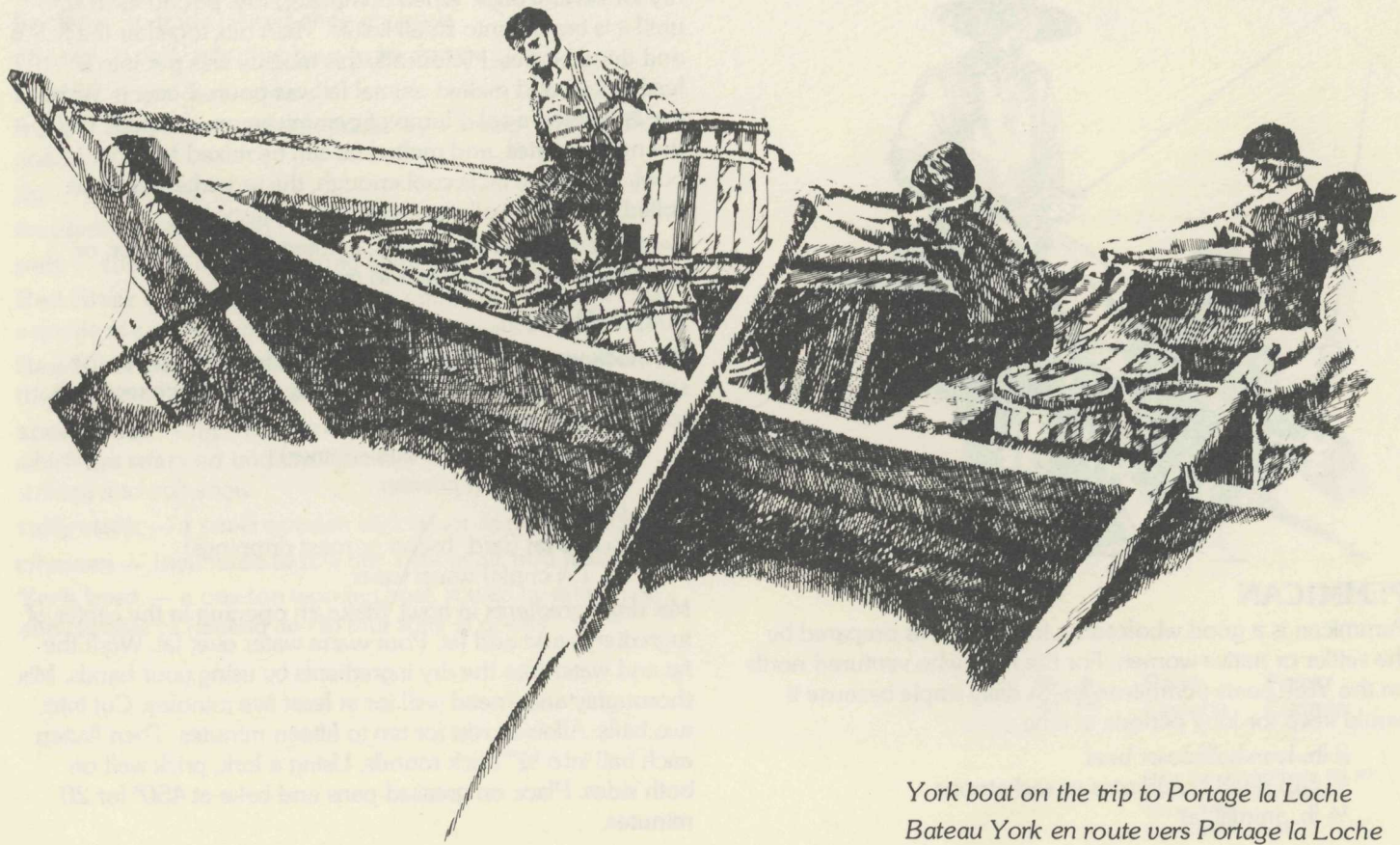
After the day's work was done, men of the Red River community sat back, pipes in hand, to recount the day's activities. They might play checkers or cards, and horseshoes was a popular game. If anyone had any energy left it was not difficult to convince a fiddler to strike up a high spirited tune for a jig. Horse racing was very popular and in the winter gaily decorated carriages could be seen moving along the rivers.

The women might gather in the evening, mending clothes, or knitting their homespun wool as they caught up on the latest events of the community.

Children learned the skills of farming, hunting and trapping, but like most girls and boys they also loved to play. In the summer months they went swimming or fishing, while sleigh-riding, skating and tobogganing were popular in the winter.

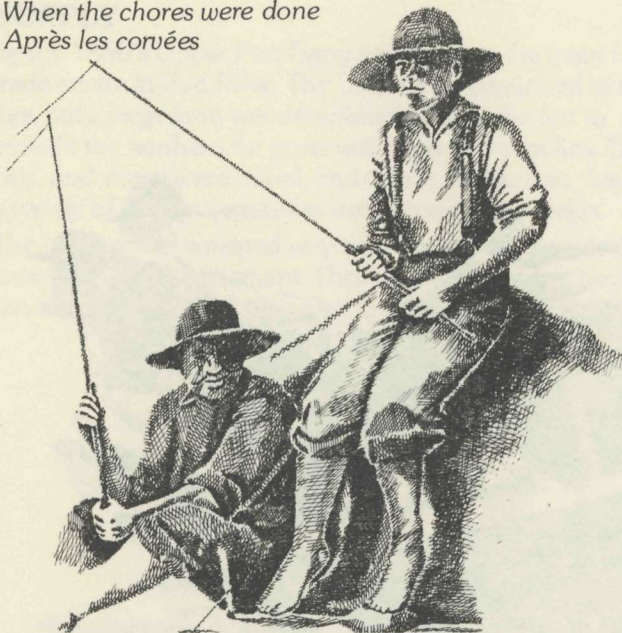
Daily chores

Travail de routine et corvées



*York boat on the trip to Portage la Loche
Bateau York en route vers Portage la Loche*

When the chores were done
Après les corvées



PEMMICAN

Pemmican is a good wholesome food that was prepared by the settler or native women. For the men who ventured north on the York boats pemmican was a daily staple because it would keep for long periods of time.

- 2 lb. lean buffalo or beef
- 1/4 cup dried blueberries or saskatoons
- 1/8 lb. animal fat

Cut the buffalo or beef into long strips and hang in the sun to dry for several days. When completely dry, pound each strip until it is broken into small flakes. Then mix together the flakes and dried berries. Historically this mixture was put into a leather bag and melted animal fat was poured over it. When the fat cooled a solid lump of pemmican was formed. Today the meat, berries, and melted fat can be mixed together in a bowl. When the fat is cool enough, the ingredients can be rolled into large balls and stored in a plastic bag.

Pemmican can be eaten as is, cooked like hamburger, or boiled with flour and water to make soup.

BANNOCK

Bannock was a quick and popular flat bread made by the settlers and native people in the area. Here is one recipe that you can try at home.

- 3 cups flour (sifted with strainer)
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup fat (lard, bacon or roast drippings)
- 1 - 1 1/4 cup(s) warm water

Mix dry ingredients in bowl. Make an opening in the center of ingredients and add fat. Pour warm water over fat. Work the fat and water into the dry ingredients by using your hands. Mix thoroughly and knead well for at least five minutes. Cut into two balls. Allow to rest for ten to fifteen minutes. Then flatten each ball into 1/2" thick rounds. Using a fork, prick well on both sides. Place on greased pans and bake at 450° for 20 minutes.

GLOSSARY

barter — to trade by exchange of goods

chores — daily jobs that have to be done

famine — a scarcity of food

freight cart — a sleigh pulled by a horse, transporting goods

jig — a lively folk dance

musket — a trade gun

pelt — the skin of a fur-bearing animal

Red River Cart — a wooden cart, pulled by an ox or horse, capable of carrying up to five hundred pounds

Red River Settlement — The settlement at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers

snowshoes — light frames of wood strung with rawhide which are strapped underneath the mocassins to prevent sinking into soft snow

tally stick — a small wooden stick given as money in trade

tripmen — men hired to row the York boats and haul goods

York boat — a one-ton wooden boat, rowed by nine men, and capable of hauling two to four tons of goods



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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

DOWN

1. A lack of food.
2. A way of buying goods at Lower Fort Garry's Saleshop
3. Women knitted socks, hats and mitts from homespun

4. The most important craftsman in the settlement was the

5. Skins of fur bearing animals.
6. Men hired to row the York boats and haul goods.
7. Lower Fort Garry is located on the banks of the
_____ River
8. Another name for buffalo.

ACROSS

9. The building used to store furs and goods at Lower Fort Garry
10. A kind of tree bark used to make native canoes.
11. A supply boat capable of carrying 2-4 tons of goods.
12. The pelt of this animal is used to make hats.
13. A lively folk dance.
14. Each man, woman and child had his daily _____.
15. Another name for "tally stick".
16. A device used to capture fur bearing animals.
17. One method of skinning an animal.
18. A trade gun
19. Indians used glass _____ to decorate their clothing.
20. A single _____ pulled the sturdy Red River cart.
21. The furs were sent from York Factory to _____.

