

Suggested Reading: Books for adults and young readers

These materials represent the sources used in the development of this packet and our favorite sources on the subject of the fur trade. Many are available from local libraries, or through interlibrary loan. Some (marked with a ◇) are available for purchase from the Minnesota Historical Society Press. Others (marked with a •) are available at the North West Company Fur Post gift shop.

Books for adults

Beyond the River and the Bay: Some Observations on the State of the Canadian Northwest in 1811 with a View to Providing the Intending Settler with an Intimate Knowledge of That Country. Eric Ross. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970)

Based on an imaginary long-lost manuscript, the book describes historical geography of the fur trade country during the early years of the nineteenth century when traders from Montréal clashed with their rivals from Hudson's Bay.

Documents Relating to the North West Company: With Introduction, Notes, and Appendices. W. Stewart Wallace, editor. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934, reprinted 1968)

A collection of both published and unpublished documents, including letters, minutes of annual meetings and articles of agreement, relating to the North West Company. The "Bibliographic Dictionary of the Nor'westers" (appendix A) is especially useful.

Empire of the Bay: The Company of Adventurers That Seized a Continent. Peter C. Newman. (New York: Penguin Books, 1998)

Consisting of Newman's *Company of Adventurers* and *Caesars of the Wilderness*, this sweeping volume chronicles the epic adventures of the eccentric knights, unscrupulous financiers, and shrewd Scottish traders who created the North American fur trade.

• *Exploring the Fur Trade Routes of North America: Discover the Highways that Opened a Continent.* Barbara Huck. (Winnipeg: Heartland Publications, Inc., 2000)

Explains how the story of the fur trade is the story of North America. Profiles dozens of fur trade sites in Canada and the upper Midwest, including the North West Company Fur Post (Pine City, Minnesota) and Grand Portage National Monument.

• *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie.* Barry Gough. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, Volume 14 in *The Oklahoma Western Biographies*, 1997)

The history of Alexander Mackenzie, a man of enormous ego and overpowering ambition who left Scotland in search of opportunity in the North American fur trade.

Five Fur Traders of the Northwest. Charles M. Gates, editor. (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1965)

One of the first popular resources on the fur trade, this book contains the narrative of Peter Pond, as well as four diaries written by John Macdonell, Archibald N. McLeod,

Hugh Faries and Thomas Connor. Years later, Connor's journal was correctly attributed to John Sayer.

- ◇ *The Grand Portage Story*. Carolyn Gilman. (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992)
The compelling tale of the legendary fur trade crossroads in northern Minnesota, where Indian and European cultures have competed with, cooperated and accommodated each other for nearly three centuries.
- Harmon's Journal 1800-1819*. Daniel Williams Harmon. W. Kaye Lamb, editor. (Victoria, British Columbia: Touch Wood Editions, 2006)
Reprint of the authentic 1957 version, this is "one of the most famous journals of the Canadian fur trade." It tells an engaging story of the rough-and-tumble life of a fur trader, as well as valuable details about the activities of notable Nor'westers.
- *The Illustrated Voyageur*. Howard Sivertson. (Duluth, MN: Lake Superior Port Cities, Inc., 1999)
Beautiful and carefully researched paintings, accompanied by informative text relating to various aspects of the Lake Superior fur trade.
- *John Sayer's Snake River Journal, 1804-05: A Fur Trade Diary from East Central Minnesota*. Douglas A. Birk, editor. (Minneapolis: Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, Inc., 1989)
The journal of an accomplished North West Company wintering partner ; the editor also includes insight into the relationships, the operation, and the culture of the people with ties to the John Sayer's Snake River Post.
- Lake Superior to Rainy Lake: Three Centuries of Fur Trade History*. Jean Morrison, editor. (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 2003)
This collection of writings focuses on the fur trade along borderlands along Lake Superior's northern shore, covering such aspects as rivalry and relationship between the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company.
- *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade*. Carolyn Podruchny. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006)
Explores the beliefs, ethics, culture and daily lives of the *voyageurs* who worked in the fur trade as paddlers and laborers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- *Many Tender Ties*. Sylvia Van Kirk. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980)
Insightful exploration of women's roles in the fur trade that promotes the idea that Indian, métis and European women were a powerful force, not victims.
- *The Messrs. Build Commodiously: A Guide to John Sayer's 1804-1805 North West Company Wintering Expedition to the Snake River, Minnesota*. Douglas A. Birk. (Brainerd, MN: Evergreen Press, 2004)
An easy-to-read volume that describes North West Company *bourgeois* John Sayer's expedition to the Snake River, and his post's more recent reconstruction.
- ◇ *My First Years in the Fur Trade: The Journals of 1802-184*. George Nelson. Laura Peers and Theresa Schenck, editors. (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002)

The journal of a fifteen year old boy leaving his family and beginning a five-year adventure as a clerk for the XY Company and adapting to his new life as a fur trader.

The North West Company. Marjorie Wilkins Campbell. (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, Publishers, 1957, reprinted 1983)

One of the first modern histories of the group of independent fur traders from Montreal that banded together to form the North West Company. Describes their far reaching accomplishments and the course of the country that would become Canada.

The Nor'Westers: The Fight for the Fur Trade. Marjorie Wilkins Campbell. (Calgary, Alberta and Allston, MA: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2002)

Captures the drama of the North West Company fur trade, from 1779 until the Hudson's Bay Company took over in 1821.

The Pedlars from Quebec and Other Papers on the Nor'westers. W. Stewart Wallace. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1954)

A rather quaint series of eleven essays addressing topics concerning the history of the North West Company, including "The Story of Simon McTavish," "Was Peter Pond a Murderer?" and "Fort William of the Fur Trade" and based on the author's research into remaining original documents relating to the company.

Superior Rendezvous Place: Fort William in the Canadian Fur Trade. Jean Morrison. (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001)

A history of Fort William, in present-day Thunder Bay, and the role it played in the early 19th century fur trade.

A Toast to the Fur Trade: A Picture Essay on Its Material Culture. Robert C. Wheeler. (Saint Paul, MN: Wheeler Productions, 1985)

About the material culture of the Upper Great Lakes fur trade, complete with illustrations of actual artifacts found at fur trade era sites such as Grand Portage.

◆ *The Voyageur*. Grace Lee Nute. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1955, reprinted 1987)

For many years, this was the definitive work on the French-Canadians who manned the great canoes of the fur trade from Montréal to the far northwest. Although some conclusions have been refuted, Nute brought the world of the fur trade alive and to a wide audience with this book.

◆ *The Voyageur's Highway: Minnesota's Border Lake Land*. Grace Lee Nute. (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1941, reprinted 1969)

Another classic, this one describes the routes along Lake Superior that connected to Minnesota's inland waterways used by explorers, fur traders, missionaries, map makers, lumberjacks, miners, conservationists and naturalists.

◆ *Where Two Worlds Meet: The Great Lakes Fur Trade*. Carolyn Gilman, editor. (Minnesota Historical Society Press, Saint Paul, 1982)

Exhibit catalog; still an interesting read and a useful resources for its many important essays and illustrations about the upper Great Lakes fur trade and its material culture.

Books for young readers

Easy readers

- *The Red Sash*. Jean E. Pendziwol, pictures by Nicolas Debon. (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, A Groundwood Book, 2005)
A young Métis boy and his family help prepare for the great feast in the Great Hall at Fort William during the annual *rendezvous* of the North West Company.
- *The Voyageur's Paddle*. Kathy-jo Wargin, illustrations by David Geister, (Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 2007)
Readers follow a young voyageur on his yearly fur trading cycle from wintering post to Grand Portage, annual *rendezvous* of the North West Company.

Chapter books

- *The Broken Blade*. William Durbin. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, A Yearling Book, 1997)
In 1800, thirteen-year-old Pierre La Page signs on to be a *voyageur*, leaving Montréal and paddling twenty-four hundred miles into the wilderness.
- Trouble at Fort La Point*. Kathleen Ernst. (Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications, American Girl/History Mysteries, 2000)
In 1732, twelve-year-old Suzette hopes her father will win a fur trapping contest so that he can quit being a *voyageur* and stay with his Ojibwe family year-round. But when he is accused of stealing, Suzette must use her knowledge of both European and Native ways to find the real thief.
- Wintering*. William Durbin. (New York: Dell Books for Young Readers, A Yearling Book, 1999)
In this sequel to *The Broken Blade*, Pierre La Page, now fourteen, is ready to become an *hivernant*, to “winter over,” trapping and trading furs with a crew in the north.
- With Pipe, Paddle, and Song: A Story of the French-Canadian Voyageurs circa 1750*. Elizabeth Yates. (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968)
A young French-Indian boy leaves his familiar life in Montréal to join a brigade of *voyageurs* traveling deep into the *pays d'en haut*.

Activity book

- ♦ *A Great Lakes Fur Trade Coloring Book (Les Fourrures et les Grands lacs Cahier à colorer)*. Chet Kozlak. (Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981)
Useful text in both English and French and well-researched coloring sheets that detail various aspects of the fur trade and the daily lives of voyageurs.