

*Peter Fidler, Trader and Surveyor. 1769 to 1822.*

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Twenty-five years ago I published in the Proceedings of the Canadian Institute, Toronto, a short account of the surveys made by David Thompson in North Western America during the latter part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. My researches at the time also showed the existence of another surveyor named Peter Fidler who was in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company at the same time, but very little could be learned about him, or of the extent of the work which he accomplished.

Since that time Doctor Bryce has told us something about the man, and the extraordinary will which he left at his death, in which, after bequeathing his Note-books and Journals to the Hudson's Bay Company, and making other legacies, he directed all the balance of his estate, after his youngest son had come of age, to be placed in the public funds, and to be allowed to accumulate there until August 16th, 1969, the 200th anniversary of his birth, when the accumulated sum was to be given to the heir of his youngest son, Peter Fidler. Mr. James White has also shown us the map which was made by Mr. G. Taylor for Mr. J. G. McTavish to illustrate the surveys made by Mr. Fidler in Western Canada but the exact extent of these surveys, the times when he made them, and the records which he kept of the conditions of life as he saw them in the various parts of the country in which he happened to be travelling or residing in that strenuous period of struggle between the English and Canadian trading Companies, when success in the fur trade depended in no small degree on fighting ability, have remained unknown.

Such information as we had about the man was just enough to whet our appetites for more, and students of western history have been keenly on the lookout for notes and memoranda which would supply the missing data, and would furnish a record of the work done by this pioneer in the exploration of the northern and western portions of our country.

Last summer, while at York Factory, on Hudson Bay, in the capacity of Commissioner for the Government of the Province of Ontario, I had the good fortune to find, and through the kindness of Mr. Ray, to be allowed to inspect, several of the original notebooks kept by Peter Fidler while he was in Western Canada. These gave accounts