

Grosseilliers and Radisson to be secured by the English. France made many efforts to lure them back to her service, and eventually succeeded in doing so. Thus it happened that in 1682 we find these same adventurers again in Hudson Bay, this time with ships from Canada. They established a post on the Hayes River. Naturally the French and English interests in Hudson Bay very soon conflicted, and for some years prior to 1714 France was in control there. In the latter year, however, England regained her territorial rights there by the Treaty of Utrecht, and has retained them ever since.

Before this time, regular posts had been established from Canada around Lake Superior and it is recorded that in 1688 a Frenchman named De Noyon wintered on the Lake of the Woods.

Verendrye's Explorations

The name of Pierre Gaultier de la Verendrye deserves great honor in the history of the Canadian West. He was a Canadian seignior, born at Three Rivers. After some years of honorable service in the French armies in Europe, he was in 1728 in command of the Nipigon post on Lake Superior. No doubt it was during his stay here, while the Indians were bringing indefinite reports of the vast countries lying to the westward, that ambition inspired Verendrye to explore those territories, and to pass over them to the shore of that mystic western sea. For many years he pursued this purpose with an energy and determination which overcame not only the tremendous natural difficulties presented by the regions through which he travelled, but also jealous interference and opposition on the part of influential people in Canada. He was accused of seeking merely his own profit in the fur trade. As he received no assistance from the authorities in France or Canada (except a monopoly in the prosecution of discoveries), he was forced to engage in trade to try to meet the great expenses entailed in fitting out his expeditions. The best evidence that he did not seek merely to enrich himself is that he expended what little property he originally had, in pushing forward his explorations, and eventually died a broken man, deeply in debt.

The circumstances under which de la Verendrye labored must appear almost incredible to us now. The only assistance he received from the government of France or Canada was permission to carry on his discoveries. Apparently, he would have been quite satisfied had that permission been wholehearted. All the expenses of his outfits, and even the wages of his men, he had to provide himself. Not only that, but he was balked at every turn by jealous people in Canada, who did their utmost, while he was away, to influence the governors against him. Time after time he was forced to return to Montreal because the supplies which he had arranged to have sent to Lake Superior were not sent. Thus, not only would his explorations be halted, but his associates in the West were in danger of starvation while he returned to the settlements to get the necessary supplies himself. How great must have been the zeal and determination of the man, to have struggled on under these conditions and to have achieved as much as he did!

Reaches Lake of the Woods

It is probable that before Verendrye's time, possibly during the 17th century, numbers of Canadian "coureurs de bois" penetrated into the country far to the west of the Great Lakes. But if they did, they left no records of their wanderings, for probably none of them ever returned. They became merged with the Indian tribes among whom they settled.

Verendrye attempted his first trip westward in 1731, accompanied by his sons and a son-in-law, de la Jemmerai. But on reaching the Grande Portage, his men refused to go farther, so he was forced to winter there, although he sent Jemmerai on to Rainy Lake, where Fort St. Pierre was built.

The following summer Verendrye succeeded in reaching the Lake of the Woods, where he established Fort St. Charles. This fort then became his depot, and in 1734 his sons established Fort Marepas near the mouth of the Winni-

peg River, a few miles from Lake Winnipeg. His opponents in Canada interfered with his arrangements so successfully at this time that he was prevented from making any further progress for several years. So it was not until September, 1738, that Verendrye succeeded in reaching the Red River. He ascended this river and its branch, the Assiniboine, to the point where Portage la Prairie now stands. Here he built Fort la Reine and spent the winter. During this winter he travelled south-west across the prairies and reached the Mandan Indians on the Missouri river. The following summer his sons made explorations on Lake Manitoba and the lower part of the Saskatchewan River.

In 1741, Verendrye's sons again journeyed across to the Missouri river with the intention of pushing westward from there to the western sea. But their presents for the Mandan Indians were stolen, and as a result they could not secure guides to take them to the west. They were forced to give up that purpose for the time being, and return to Fort la Reine.

During the winter of 1741-2, a fort was established on Lake Manitoba and another called Fort Bourbon at the mouth of the Dauphin river on Lake Winnipeg.

Explored Rocky Mountains

In 1742 Verendrye's sons again essayed the journey to the Missouri and thence westward to the sea. They actually reached the Rocky Mountains, but the Indians who accompanied them would venture no farther. However, they spent 14 months exploring the country north and south along the mountains about the head waters of the Missouri river and its tributaries.

In 1744 Verendrye's eldest son built Fort Paskoyac, near the mouth of the Saskatchewan River. Five years later he ascended the river to the forks, where Prince Albert now stands.

About this time the Sieur de la Verendrye died suddenly in Montreal, while he was preparing another outfit for the West. The prosecution of the explorations he had set his heart upon, fell into other hands. Thus we find de Niverville in charge of Fort Paskoyac in 1750-1. During the summer of 1751, he sent ten voyageurs up the Saskatchewan to establish a post near the mountains. They ascended the south branch and built Fort de la Jonquière, either where Calgary now stands or some distance farther up. It is uncertain how long this fort was in use, though probably only for a season or two. In 1754 the Chevalier de la Corne built Fort de la Corne on the Saskatchewan, a few miles below the forks. This fort retained its position and name for a hundred years afterwards.

Owing to the approaching struggle with England for the possession of Canada, the French forts were all abandoned in 1756 and so ended the French explorations in the West.

Wars Delayed Exploration

After the conquest of Canada, numerous independent English and Scotch traders began to engage in the fur trade and penetrated into the western country. But it was some years before they covered the range attained by the French. In other words, the wars, which culminated in Britain gaining possession of Canada, delayed the progress of exploration in the West by at least 20 years.

In 1770 a man named Curry reached the old Fort Bourbon on Lake Winnipeg and the next year Finlay was at Fort de la Corne on the Saskatchewan. Joseph Frobisher conceived the idea of penetrating farther northward to intercept the Indians going down to the Hudson Bay Co.'s posts on the coasts of the bay. In the summer of 1772 he reached the Churchill river, probably by way of the Saskatchewan and north from Cumberland House. He met with such great success that many traders followed and by 1778 a post had been established on the Athabaska river, a short distance above the lake. With many independent traders engaged in the business, there was naturally a great deal of opposition and rivalry. This reduced the profits. To make matters worse, in 1780 a fearful epidemic of smallpox sweeping northward from the United States, carried off so many of the Indians that the fur trade was still further injured. Many