

Indian tribes bringing their furs to the mouth of the river on the bay. By canoe and portage Lake Athabasca was reached by this route, which gave immediate communication with Mackenzie River to the Arctic Sea; with Great Slave Lake and Great Fish or Back River to the north-east; and with Peace River to the west. This last river afforded a pass through the Rocky Mountains to New Caledonia, flowing as it does through the Rockies from their western side, and connecting there by portages with the Fraser and Columbia Rivers of the Pacific slope.

(2) The second avenue to Rupert's Land was, by leaving Hudson Bay at York Factory, ascending Nelson River, and reaching Lake Winnipeg, which has three great tributaries: (1) Winnipeg River, which bears toward the lake the waters of Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake and River, and other streams from a point within forty miles of Lake Superior; (2) Red River, which runs from the very sources of the Mississippi northward and receives the Assiniboine, one of whose tributaries, the Souris, approaches the Missouri at its head waters, and whose main body comes hundreds of miles from the western prairies; (3) the Saskatchewan, the "mighty rapid river" as its name implies, which drains, with its two branches, above the forks, a vast country, reaching to the Rocky Mountains. The wide region thus drained, consisting of the three geological areas—the Laurentian, the Prairie country, and the Rocky Mountain and Pacific slope—owing to its numberless lakes and interlacing rivers, afforded, even in its wild and unimproved condition, wonderful means of communication for the explorer.

C.

The Fur-Trading Companies Promoted, sometimes for their own purposes, and at times for the advancement of geographical knowledge, the Exploration of this Domain.

(1) The French fur-traders, to whom belongs the glory of exploring the Upper Lakes and the Mississippi, discovered, by way of Lake Superior, the Winnipeg River branch of this communication, and to them belongs the honour of finding, by this route, the Red, Assiniboine, Upper Missouri, and Saskatchewan Rivers, even to the Rocky Mountains.

(2) The original Hudson's Bay Company, leaving the sea, by the northern route and also by Nelson River, in 1774 established themselves on the Saskatchewan, and by the year 1800 held numerous points in Rupert's Land.

(3) The North-West Company of Montreal, which had, by its still independent traders, carried on trade from the Upper Lakes, even to Lake Athabasca, from the year 1766, became, in the year 1787, a strong company, so that, in a generation, its posts stretched from Montreal to Columbia River on the Pacific, and the men in its employ numbered five thousand.

(4) The X Y Company, or New North-West Company, to which belonged Sir Alexander Mackenzie and the Hon. Edward Ellice, was an offshoot of the North-West Company, and, beginning in 1796, it continued till 1804. It erected posts by the side of those of the North-West Company, so that, about the year 1800, there were points where a Hudson's Bay, a North-Wester, and an X Y Fort stood side by side.

(5) The Astor Fur Company of New York, begun in 1810, only lasted a few years,