

There is in Canadian political, business, and social life a certain formality and conservatism that reflect this fact. This conservatism has its regrettable side, of course. The walking dead are out in numbers—the mediocrats, the anti-hothead vote. We are ‘the elected squares’ to one writer and ‘the white baboos’ to another; for our inefficiencies there is no excuse. A little talent will get you a long way in an uncompetitive society, protected by tariffs and government rewards. A Canadian has been defined as somebody who does not play for keeps. Even his anti-trust laws fail to enforce business competition as ruthlessly as the American ones (*a new Competition Act has been promised for this session of Parliament [Ed.]*).

The Canadian, unlike the Frenchman, the Britisher, or the American, has had no single dominant metropolis. The English-speaking Canadian has had New York and London as well as Toronto and Montreal, and for the French Canadian there



has been Paris as well. This condition breeds a divided vision, sometimes paralyzing, sometimes detached and ironic, always multiple, and useful for living in the electronic age's global village. It has meant that Canadians have been better interpreters and critics of culture than creators of it—better as performing musicians and actors, for example, than as composers or playwrights. In politics and diplomacy this has led to an extreme pragmatism. Our two major parties are even less the preserve of one class or doctrine than the American parties. Certainly there has been nothing like the Republicans' monopoly of the rich and of the free-enterprise creed. There are no strong ideological overtones about this Canadian approach to other peoples and world affairs.

When a distinguished American advocate of socialism, pacifism, and free love was turned back by Canadian immigration authorities in 1965, the

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A DAB OF HISTORY

[H. KELSEY EXPLORES PLAINS
FOES OF COMPANY SMIRCH HIS NAME]

Henry Kelsey is generally credited with being the first white man to travel the vast western plains of Canada, though he apparently never saw himself as a great explorer. Some of his contemporaries, too, went to interesting lengths to downplay his feats.

Henry probably was born in 1670—the year a charter was granted to “The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson’s Bay.” His parents seem to have been of humble status, though somebody with Henry’s welfare in mind apparently provided him with an education above-average for a boy of his day, for it is unlikely that a street waif would have picked up languages and navigation as handily as he later did.

At about fourteen, Henry was apprenticed into the Hudson’s Bay Company and was promptly put on the “Lucy” bound for Hudson’s Bay and the wilds where he would spend forty years.

He considered himself only an agent to open new avenues of trade. Fragmentary documentation for years inhibited his acceptance as a true



explorer of Canada. Even after his death in England in the 1720’s, there were determined attacks on the Hudson’s Bay Company, questioning the rights granted in this famous charter of 1670 and charging

that the obligation to explore had not been fulfilled. Suggestions were made that Kelsey, instead of being dispatched by the company from their posts on the Bay, had, as an impulsive twenty-year-old, run away to travel aimlessly with the Indians, with whom he seems to have gotten on famously. One of the chief opponents of the company was a man named Arthur Dobbs, who, in 1754, left his ancestral castle in Ireland to become Governor of North Carolina. After a decent wait—in 1926—his castle was cleaned out, and Kelsey’s journal was found in the library: 128 pages minutely describing his travels and the geography, flora and fauna he found—an impressive lot. “The Kelsey Papers” were jointly published in Northern Ireland and Canada, and there has been little doubt since that Henry Kelsey was a first.