

for family purposes, without attention being called to it by the traveler of that time.

To this industry belongs the distinction of being the first important development of a mineral product in the Northwest. We can not consider of equal importance the use made of the tar sands on the Athabasca River, where, according to Harmon,⁵ the "bitumen, which is in the fluid state, is mixed with gum, or the resinous substance collected from the spruce fir, and is used for gumming canoes". No doubt the natural salt of the Salt River in the Mackenzie Basin was used much more extensively in the early years of last century, and in fact throughout the century. To quote Harmon again,⁶ "down Slave River, there are several places, where almost any quantity of excellent clean white salt may be taken, with as much ease as sand along the seashore. From these places the greater part of the northwest is supplied with this valuable article." If the Northwest be taken in its present-day, strict geographical sense as the Mackenzie Basin, his words, written in the early years of the century, still hold to-day. We are concerned more particularly with the evaporation processes of the Swan River district, however, because they represent a more specialized stage in the development of the mineral industry, analogous to the extraction of the metals from their ores. As a commercial industry salt-making was practically from the beginning, and throughout its history, in the hands of the freemen. Mr. Donald Macdonald of Fairford, formerly in charge of the Shoal River post, believes that the first independent manufacturer in the district was Marcette, who extracted salt from brines at the mouth of the Shoal River, Swan Lake, and that the business was subsequently taken up by Chartrand

⁵ Harmon's *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America*, 1820, p. 171.

⁶ Harmon's *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America*, 1820, p. 172.