

Fraser, in 1808 followed the course of that turbulent river in a canoe to the mouth, and returned by the same route. This was one of the most remarkable exploits of those early days. There were, of course, many others of these early fur traders who assisted in planting the long line of forts from the extreme north down into Washington and Oregon. The efforts of the Astor Fur Trading Company to establish itself in the West, owing to the War of 1812 and other causes, were a failure, and Astoria soon passed into the hands of the North-West Company. To those brave, hardy and enterprising pioneers the present generation owes a debt of gratitude for making possible the civilization we now enjoy. They have been called the kings of the forest and plain, and so far as their deeds were noble, their rule over the natives just, and their lives useful, they are indeed worthy of royal recognition. They were a race of great men. Usually of giant strength, untiring energy, and fearless in the extreme, they risked all dangers and overcame all obstacles.

About 1824 the Hudson's Bay Company, after its union with the North-West Fur Company in 1821, established headquarters for the Pacific Coast at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia. Dr. McLaughlin, often referred to in the United States as the "Father of Oregon," was placed in charge as Chief Factor, and then posts and forts were extended all along and near the coast northward, as far as Fort Simpson. Among these were included, in order of erection, Langley, Williamette, Simpson, McLaughlin, Nisqually, Essington, Rupert, Cowlitz, Victoria, Hope, Yale, and Nanaimo, the last named being built in 1852. There were over sixty of these west of the Rocky Mountains.

In Alaska the fur trade was for many years in the hands of the Russian American Fur Company, of which the present Alaska Commercial Company is a successor. It obtained its charter in 1799. From this company the Hudson's Bay Company leased the Alaskan Territory for a term of ten years, from 1839 to 1849, and thus had for a period the absolute control of all the furs and trade of the North-West, and occupied a territory larger than all the rest of North America put together.

Important political events were occurring in the outside world that gradually brought about a change, and little by little narrowed