

PART I

Fort George and Thompson River, 1822-28

McDonald was sent to the west coast headquarters at Fort George in November 1821 to take an inventory of the NWC posts in the Columbia District that had been acquired with the merger of the NWC and the HBC earlier that year. His role at that time did not involve correspondence or keeping the post journal, and although there are many account books in his hand, only two of his letters have been located from the years before he took charge of the Thompson River District in February 1826.

The first letter in the section that follows was written to accompany the detailed inventory of Fort George, Spokane House, Nez Percés (Walla Walla), and Okanagan (Thompson River), and it was completed in the months after his arrival. The second was written in the fall of 1825, when McDonald was awaiting the arrival of the new accountant, Edward Ermatinger, who was to take over the accounts and leave him free to assume his new charge of the Thompson River District (Kamloops and Okanagan). Governor Simpson had completed his 1824-25 tour of inspection and had returned to the east, leaving behind instructions for a mass of sweeping changes in the management of the district.

The Columbia had been the sole preserve of the NWC, and the old officers were firmly in charge when McDonald and Chief Trader John L. Lewes, another HBC man, arrived. With them came Chief Factor John D. Cameron, who was to share the Columbia command with Chief Factor John Haldane, both of them former NWC officials who had

received commissions under the 1821 merger agreement. Within a year both Haldane and Cameron returned east, and the charge of the district was left to Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy, who remained at the helm until George Simpson arrived in November 1824. According to Kennedy, the total complement of the fort was then thirty-seven officers and men (including eight men from the interior with the governor's canoe), twenty extra men, thirty-seven women, and thirty-five children.

In his last report from Fort George before the headquarters was moved ninety miles upriver to Fort Vancouver, Kennedy described the new location as both 'beneficially situated for trade' and 'capable of raising grain, cattle and other livestock to provide beef, pork and butter to supply any demand.' Thus he was able to fulfil Simpson's orders to reduce the consumption of imported produce and place more reliance on homegrown supplies. Kennedy left the newly established Fort Vancouver with Simpson in the spring of 1825. Dr John McLoughlin, who had come west in Simpson's wake a few months before, was left in charge of the Columbia District, beginning a reign that was to last for more than twenty years.

For McDonald, the years between 1821 and 1826 were not uneventful. Aside from his accounting work, which also included managing the trading stores on the post, there were momentous changes in his personal life. In 1823, in the 'custom of the country,' he took a Native wife, Princess Raven – Koale Koa – daughter of the influential Chinook chief Comcomly. And early in 1824 a son, Ranald, was born to them. Raven did not long survive the baby's arrival, and Ranald was sent to live with his aunts in Comcomly's lodge. Sometime that year McDonald met and fell in love with young Jane Klyne, daughter of Michel Klyne, the postmaster at Jasper House. She became his country wife, and when he moved to Kamloops in February 1826, he was to prepare a home to welcome her the following summer.

McDonald was comfortable at Kamloops, with his family (including young Ranald, Jane's first-born son Angus, and [later] Archibald, born at Kamloops in February 1828) and congenial colleagues like Frank Erma-tinger and Francis Annance around him. He enjoyed the climate and the landscape, and he relished being given the charge of a district. As he bragged to Andrew Colvile, at last he began to hope he might aspire to a chief tradership in the near future. He was able to pursue his interest in natural history, sending a box of specimens back to John Halkett in London in April 1826 and renewing his acquaintance with botanist David Douglas, who was travelling in the region.

Kamloops was the link between New Caledonia and Fort Vancouver. Simpson had decreed that the New Caledonia District would now be

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part of the Columbia, and furs from the Fort St James and Alexandria trade were to be transported south to Fort Vancouver rather than east to Hudson Bay. Thompson River (with its posts at Kamloops and Okanagan) was expected to be self-reliant as well as to provide a good supply of fresh horses for the pack trains and rations of dried salmon for the New Caledonia men as they made their way down in the spring with their loads of furs. As these letters reveal, it was a challenge that sometimes caused friction and frequently led to ingenious solutions.

With the exception of one personal letter to Andrew Colvile, found in the Selkirk Papers (National Archives of Canada), and the letters to Simpson taken from Simpson's Correspondence Inward in the HBCA, Winnipeg, the main body of letters from Thompson River are in the post letter book (appendix to the fort journal), which is also in the HBCA.

Fort George, Columbia River, 6 April 1822

To the Governor & Council of the Northern Department,
Rupert's Land
Gentlemen:

In pursuance of orders received last fall from Governor [George] Simpson, I accompanied Messrs [John Dugald] Cameron and [John Lee] Lewes to this place where we arrived on 8th November, and in a few



Fort George (Astoria), at the mouth of the Columbia River, painted by Henry Warre in September 1845. (National Archives of Canada C1626)

days after, commenced taking inventory of the property at Fort George which is now enclosed and forwarded for your consideration. As no specific directions were given as to the prices, form or distinction to be observed in making out the inventory, I have taken the liberty of closing the different descriptions of goods under six separate heads, in case such distinction might afterwards be required in the final arrangement of them.

The first column shows the quantity of old stock *actually* found here last fall, the second the amount of the Interior inventories taken collectively from the Book of Remains last spring, and the third column the aggregate amount of what was sent to the Interior including New Caledonia from 15th March to 12th November. So that the total, with the addition of what was sold to servants and otherwise disposed of ... last year at Fort George (of which no distinct acct was kept) ought to constitute the Remains of the North West Company in this River last spring, as taken out by Mr James Keith. With respect to the other section of the inventory, altho it is to be presumed that the whole amount is at once charged to the present Hudson's Bay Company, we have nevertheless exhibited in separate columns what was found here last fall, as well as the proportion of that Outfit which was issued for the Inland trade, and will in like manner correspond with the whole of the importation less what was previously used at Fort George last summer along with the other goods. It may not be improper to remark that the last year's Outfit under the mark [7] was found perfectly *entire*. The items inserted under the mark NW [MV] include the Boston invoice¹ which is chiefly in the article provision, the whole is now thrown into old stock, and priced in sterling money according to the two last years consignments. There is in like manner a few articles included in this inventory that were manufactured at Fort George out of materials mentioned on the remains of spring list such as oil cloths, Bags, Salops, Iron works, &c and can only be considered as to the good in lieu of the difference in those articles. The [items] with the remarks prefixed were taken out from here last spring after the inventory was taken and are of course charged to the English River department. There is no further explanation in my opinion that is required. The few items among articles of an old stock from China, and another distinguished by the names of Inglis Ellice & Coy are all included with the general stock on hand last spring. [You will find] the same distinction as in the trading goods with respect to

¹ The NWC had a contractual arrangement with Perkins and Company of Boston to ship furs from the Columbia to Canton, to return with supplies for their own needs, and to fulfil their obligations to Russian and Spanish coastal settlements.

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date of importation. The articles in use, new stock, &c are all put down in the usual form.² Gentlemen, as I am aware that anything in the shape of fresh intelligence to promote your common interest in the prosperity of the fur trade must always be acceptable, I hope I may not be considered as deserting from the duties of my department in life, if hereafter I should take the liberty of offering any remarks from the Columbia committee with the subject.

*Aboard the brig William and Ann, 15 October 1825*³

Report to HBC Secretary William Smith, London

In pursuance of Mr C.F. McLoughlin's command ... I came down here [to the coast] to enquire into the supposed theft of the Beaver skins on board the *William and Ann* and the means by which the sailors became in possession of other furs seen with them when the Beaver in question were searched for.

I have now to state for the information of the Honbl Committee that Michael Laframboise, the interpreter, instead of 30 left but 20 skins on board the brig, as clearly ascertained from his own subsequent confession and the recollection of the Indian who delivered them to him, and certainly the only palliative that can be offered for so glaring a mistake on the part of the interpreter is the circumstance of his perceiving on returning to the vessel that his skins were handled during his absence and one actually exchanged. But in justice to William Light this exchange of the Beaver skin was not without its being previously proposed by him to Laframboise altho the latter did not give it his consent as may be inferred by Light's own note to me on the subject. Mr C.F. McLoughlin also refers to furs found with the seamen when searching for the ten Beaver skins. I have in like manner investigated into this affair along with Capt [Henry] Hanwell – after they had all given their furs to him ... It appears the Captain thro the medium of his Chief Mate intimated to the seamen that they should not be allowed to trade furs or any other private trade on the coast but many of them have positively asserted that no formal notice of the kind was given them ... it is admitted that two or three might plead ignorance of this kind but the Captain has no

² For detail on accounts that accompanied this letter, see HBCA B.76/d/4.

³ McDonald was sent from Fort Vancouver to Fort George by McLoughlin to investigate the reported disappearance of some furs from the coastal vessel. HBC employees were forbidden to conduct any private trade with Native peoples, as this would have been a serious breach of the HBC's Licence of Exclusive Trade. Contained here is an abbreviated account of McDonald's views on the incident and one of the relatively rare acknowledgments in official documents of the presence of women on the scene.

doubt in his own mind but the whole of them are fully aware of its being prohibited by him altho he did not got to the length of reading Mr McLoughlin's letter to them or telling them there was an Act of Parliament against it ...

Allusion is also made ... to Blankets & other articles that appeared deficient in the Outfit sent on the coasting trade but from all I have been able to collect ... I am not inclined to implicate the ship's company particularly. I would however humbly suggest that another time property sent for trade of this kind should be more conveniently arranged and secured when the vessel arrives on the coast.

... Among the ship's stores left us here by Capt Hanwell is a sextant of his *own* which I believe I shall be able to make use of, but the size is one great inconvenience in carrying it about, probably the Honbl Board of Directors may not conceive it improper to send me a more portable one.

P.S. 16 October 1825

Since yesterday afternoon we have had a further clue to the affair of the Blankets which by the evidence of one of the Sandwich Islanders went to prove that two of his companions had each taken one after the vessel came back to the river and which one of them now with me confessed to be the case. I must however still take the liberty of suggesting that the property so situated in future ought to be well secured and out of temptation ... Herewith I send a list of material deficiency: 8 plain blankets 3 pts; 1 plain blanket 2½ pts; 1 blue capot 4 ells; 12 yds HBC strouds; 3 calico shirts.

McKenzie's encampment, Monday A.M.

To Capt Hanwell

If I recollect right I believe you told me the first day when Laframboise went on shore to look after the property, that the sailors still had everything that was sold to them before you last came down to the fort ... now Michael informs me for the first time that he had seen on shore four Blankets with the women of Mr [John Pearson] Swan [First Mate of the *William and Ann*], George, William (the Cook) and Duncan. It is a pity we were not acquainted with all this when the investigation was going on below. He says he told all to Mr Swan and the Doctor when you and I were away sounding ...

Fort Vancouver, 19 October 1825

To Capt Hanwell

In case it is possible you may not be over the Bar when Mr [Alexander] McKenzie is likely to get down I shall briefly state the result of an

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active inquiry I set on foot among the Owhyhees [Hawaiian employees of the HBC who had been helping load the brig] on my arrival here about 4 o'clock this morning ... I left the [Sandwich] Islanders that were with me a short distance below the fort and immediately commenced searching all their boxes ... but not the slightest shadow of suspicion could be brought home to them. Tourawhyheene on my interrogating him as to the 3 yds HB strouds I gave him on his advances of which he has now but one, told me at once he gave Capt Brown's daughter the rest - [John] Cox positively denies having given Blankets to his own wife ... with respect to James Canton and Kakarrow, America's information against them went merely to say that these fellows had taken Blankets at the ship, and it is true Canton exchanged a plain Blanket for a green one with an Indian - but all this was some time after they had their advances from me. Kakarrow in like manner owns that he gave one of his Blankets to [Jean Baptiste] Dubreuilles woman - Towai positively denies having taken the beads - Morrouna admits his having helped himself to a Blanket at the time Harry [Bell Noah] took his ... the plain matter of fact is that they and the women they kept while allowed to live in the hold with the property must have taken the deficiency in the Outfit.

THOMPSON RIVER DISTRICT

Thompson River (Kamloops), 14 March 1826

To William Connolly,⁴ Alexandria, New Caledonia

Contrary to Governor Simpson's arrangement prior to his leaving the Columbia last year, the early arrival of the Company's ship for the coast and other circumstances connected with the Department generally did not admit of my proceeding to this place with the Outfit in the summer, and even my arrival in the winter was not so early perhaps as Mr Chief Factor McLoughlin in his letter from Nez Percés might at that time have given you to understand. After Mr McLoughlin's return to Vancouver the arrangement was such that I should endeavor to be at Nez Percés about the time Mr [Donald] Manson was expected to be there with the Express [from Fort Vancouver] ... Accordingly I left Vancouver on the 7th January and found the packet at Nez Percés on the

⁴ Chief Factor William Connolly was in charge of the New Caledonia trade from 1824 to 1831. A wintering partner in the NWC, he was made a chief trader in the new HBC after the merger in 1821 and was promoted to chief factor in 1825.

14th which intimated a deficiency in the number of horses and agrès [harness] required for the use of New Caledonia as well as the state of this place. To supply these wants without interrupting the other great essential work of procuring the salmon, I lost no time in coming in with 26 horses of all ages I found with Mr [Samuel] Black [at Walla Walla] altho their poor condition forced me to leave five at Spokane and the other nineteen at Okanagan – myself reached here on the 13th February and Mr [John] McLeod started for Fort Vancouver on 19th. I now regulate myself in great measure by your letter of November addressed to myself and the answer to it by McLeod & the return of Mr [John] McBean. With respect to the horses, appèchements [buffalo hide saddle cloths] and saddles I am satisfied that in conformance with your memo of wantages, these are not far short – the pack cords I believe are complete, but of the Saskatchewan leather I can say nothing. I am aware that at the time Mr McLeod wrote, he could not have determined as to the time of my departure from here ... I have it now in my power to acquaint you that Mr [John Warren] Dease *can* without risk of want employ all his people inland and that to great advantage in removing everything to Fort Colvile⁵ in the spring and consequently we shall all rendezvous at Okanagan, unless Mr C.F. McLoughlin will find it advisable to direct that a Boat's crew from the interior should accompany down the extra Boat he may send with the Express the length of OK ... however I trust that in either case you will find everything on this communication fully to your satisfaction.

I leave this tomorrow with the Returns and upwards of 2,000 salmon, so as to meet the Express at OK where I shall have further instructions from Mr McLoughlin; in the meantime Mr Francis Ermatinger⁶ remains at this place with the interpreter & 2 good men expecting daily to hear from Alexandria ... the 2 men you were to send to replace the old hands we agreed to forward for your purpose the length of Alexandria, and when they do come no time will be lost in dispatching ours ([Étienne] Grégoire & [Jean] Gingrais ... I go down with 7 men instead of 10.

⁵ En route back east in April 1825 Governor Simpson stopped at Spokane House and made arrangements to move that post north to Kettle Falls on the Columbia River in order to avoid the sixty-mile overland trip to and from Walla Walla with furs and supplies. The new post was given the name Fort Colvile.

⁶ Francis (Frank) Ermatinger and his brother Edward joined the HBC as clerks in 1818. McDonald first met them when they crossed to Hudson Bay on the same ship in the summer of 1818, and both brothers became his lifelong friends. Both came to the Columbia in 1825. Edward retired from the fur trade in 1829, but Frank remained in the Columbia District and served with McDonald at Thompson River and, later, at Fort Colvile.

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I now leave 10 horses here exclusive of 2 of your own ... with 20 I expected to have reached here from OK before my departure all to be at your disposal on arrival here: or indeed in the event of Mr Ermatinger hearing that relief horses may be required even before you get this length he will dispatch some to meet you. Whether or not I go down to the sea before your arrival at OK I shall always have time to send up a few of the best horses I now take down, so as to enable you to remove *all* the salmon, should you determine on leaving none for the ingoing. Mr E. will also take down the few goods if they are not required for your quarter. While at Nez Percés I also selected for you from the goods left there and originally intended for the Snake country, a few capots, trousers, vests, shirts, red baize, calico, &c &c and made them up into two Bales which I left with the horses at OK, but will I expect be here with these horses hourly expected. Herewith I enclose you all the charges against New Caledonia I could pick up on the way – to those from Nez Percés I have taken the liberty to annex a few notes in explanation. The charges from Spokane ... we shall undertake to make good – there are now 36 appèchements and 15 saddles at this place and at OK 105 appèchements and 10 saddles ... On inquiry I find that should the water be too high at the Forks of Okanagan River, it can always be crossed in Indian canoes or even the main river is generally fordable between the Forks and the Doglake, otherwise I would have taken precautions to accommodate you from OK with a Boat.

If one Boat at least does not come up with the Express one, I fear the number inland will be too few for taking down the Returns. Mr C.F. McLoughlin is advertised on the subject of those intended for the trip down; 4 old ones are at OK which I shall endeavour to put in the best possible repair, altho we have no man that knows much in that way. Making no allowance for the salmon that may be traded during the spring, there is now here in store:

for taking down your Brigade	1,500
for the journey ingoing	2,500
for the present estab. to end of May	1,000
Rations 3 per diem at Okanagan when I got down	7,000
Total	12,000

For present use, these are all tolerable good salmon, but I fear the quantity appropriated for taking you in from here to Alexandria cannot at that season of the year be good. Mr Erm. will point out a certain portion for that purpose better preserved than the generality. Wishing you a safe and speedy conveyance to the banks of the Columbia.

Okanagan, 10 April 1826

To William Connolly, Alexandria

As I was on my way up to the Forks of Spokane in company with Mr C.T. John McLeod and the York Factory Express canoe, your several communications of 6th Feb. 5th & 11th March and Mr G[eorge] McDougall's letter of 22nd of last month were handed to us late last night. I need scarcely observe that the disastrous tale they contained of the fate of the horses was most painful to us both.

I returned immediately to this place so as to dispatch the bearer of the packet back to Thompson River with as little delay as possible, trusting that Mr [James] Yale will not leave that place until he has some satisfactory account for your information of what he can still do to insure the transport of the furs to the Columbia. Indeed by Mr McDougall's statement of *36 able horses fit for service* being still absolutely required, I conceive it would be imprudent in Mr Y. to return before he heard from here, as with the exception of 2 of the horses I brought on in the winter ... I am aware from the hardship they suffered going up last month, they are in no condition to be relied on as affording so many of the number required. I have therefore sent off 12 of the best horses I brought down with me two weeks ago ... to Alexandria, the rest of my Brigade was composed of mares that are just now beginning to drop their foals, but I trust that this 12 and the 12 I left above including 2 of your own with what number Mr Erm. can procure from the Indians will contrive to bring you the length of Kamloops, and from thence with the help of the young horses I conceive unfit for the journey to Alexandria and with whatever number not less than 25 Mr Dease can spare from Spokane, I think we can yet venture to entertain sanguine hopes of seeing you on the banks of the Columbia by the 10th of June ...

When I return from the Forks of Spokane, where Mr Dease is at present so far on his way with bag and baggage [family] to establish Fort Colville at the Kettle Falls, I go down to Walla Walla with 2 Boats and all the disposable hands that come up in company with the Express so as to be employed in preparing the removal of that Establishment also, and from thence I proceed by land to Fort Vancouver with 30 or 40 horses upon which depends the certain return of Mr [Peter Skene] Ogden with his furs [from Snake River] in the month of August ... I think it essential to acquaint you that our stock of salmon at this place is 1,500 less than I was aware of. There is another very heavy demand in that commodity, altho I have not had it in any official way from Mr C.F. McLoughlin. Mr [Samuel] Black, who is to have the men above alluded to attached to his place until you descend, desires me to furnish them

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with salmon, otherwise he will use corn and pease left there by the Snake expedition last fall ...

As horses are so scarce I suppose you will at once decide on leaving at Kamloops for the summer the salmon appropriated for your going in from there. I shall soon see Mr Black [at Walla Walla] on my way down, and will of course lay before him your correspondence on the affairs of New Caledonia and will not fail to urge the necessity of buying horses, altho in fact orders to that effect are in constant force with the Gentlemen at Walla Walla ever since Gov Simpson left us last year, but I am sorry to remark that the Natives of that quarter seem to feel great reluctance in parting with animals so much in admiration among themselves. I understand that 106 was the original number of skins from the Saskatchewan last fall and that 94 only were forwarded. Your letter to the Saskatchewan Gentlemen just arrived in time to cross by the Express canoe. Two of our men are busily employed about the Boats and I think there will be as many as we are likely to require. I hope they will also be able to block out paddles, but there would be no harm in your men themselves looking after those things as they come along. I start for the Spokane Forks early tomorrow morning, and I trust Mr Dease will have it in his power to afford you considerable assistance in getting on from Kamloops to here.

Forks of Spokane, 15 April 1826

To Andrew Colvile Esqr, London

Unwilling to intrude myself too much on your attention I have not even acknowledged the receipt of your much esteemed letter two years ago, on the subject of my prospects in the present concern ... To Governor Simpson's special friendship I owe a great deal. I am quite pleased with this part of the Indian country, where am now stationary for these five years, & in fact am considered an *old hand* on this side the Rocky Mountains now. Last year the Govr & Council at York Factory were good enough to confer on me the charge of a District, so that I am now (& indeed the only HB man) associated with a long chain of N.Westers in the conduct of the Columbia trade, altho alas! I hear nothing of my Chief Tradership.

I have a Box or two of curiosities and preserved Birds going home in the first ship for Mr [John] Halkett⁷ & should he not be in England

⁷ John Halkett, a member of the HBC London committee and (like Colvile) a brother-in-law of McDonald's former patron Lord Selkirk, had a long-standing interest in natural history and gathered specimens for his friends at the British Museum.

himself at the time they arrive, they ought not to be allowed to remain any time unexposed.

The principal object of my troubling you now is the little money due to me by the Fur Trade which, from the circumstance of my being situated in this remote part of the country ever since the new arrangement I have been deprived of the opportunity of formally directing, should be put in the hands of the Honbl Hudson's Bay Company for bearing the interest usually allowed their other old clerks, but year after year finding no accumulation from interest, and that an objection is lately made by the Honbl Committee to receive any further sums of that nature above a certain amount, I trust if my application already to Mr Secty Smith on the subject has not brought about the transfer, that my soliciting your kind interference may not be considered presumptuous. If no interest can be obtained from the Company I beg leave to leave to your own better judgement the mode of employing it to the best advantage; the amount this spring is about 440 pounds.

In this part of the world I hear but little from Red River, however I am sorry to say, that by my H.B. correspondents on the east side the mountains I am not flattered with any favourable account of our Buffalo Wool concern.⁸ A Mr Henderson forwarded to me last year from York Factory a charge of 200 pounds due to the estate of the late Earl of Selkirk the nature of which I am unable to comprehend. Mr Pritchard never writes to me.

Forks of Spokane, 16 April 1826

To Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders

The circumstances of my having succeeded Chief Trader John McLeod in the charge of the Thompson River district last February requires that I should intrude upon your attention with a few lines of the annual conveyance, but as McLeod himself is about starting for headquarters, and will of course exhibit the result of last year's trade &c &c before the Council, it is only necessary for me to advert particularly to the facility that Gentleman and myself have been labouring to afford to Mr Chief Factor Connolly for getting across to the Columbia with the Returns of New Caledonia this spring and to give you the best idea of the preparations in progress for that purpose; I beg leave to refer you to a copy of my letter for Mr Connolly before I left Thompson River, and which

⁸ The Buffalo Wool Company was established at Red River after the coalition to process hides supplied by the HBC, under the management of former Nor'wester John Pritchard. Many of the HBC officers and clerks, including McDonald, held shares; unfortunately, the venture was never successful.

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is not likely to find its way to York Factory by any other route this season. [Enclosure, see letter of 14 March]

So far I apprehended no serious obstacle to the Brigade getting out in due time, but unfortunately the contents of an Express lately received from New Caledonia has frustrated these arrangements, altho I hope not totally defeated the main object. To show the extent of the difficulties we have now to obviate, I beg leave to enclose copies of the last communication from Mr Connolly, and as my reply to these letters embrace the only alternative left with us at this season of the year, I also take it upon me to transcribe it for your information. [Enclosure, see letter of 10 April]

I arrived here on the 12th and Mr Dease lost no time in coming in to the last arrangement proposed to Mr Connolly as far as it rested with him, and accordingly the following day we dispatched 20 horses for OK and with 10 or 12 more I may be able to obtain from our men I trust to make out the number of 30, which will leave that place about 1st May so as to have 10 days to recruit at Kamloops before the Brigade comes in. Under all those circumstances, and however much the risk in passing and repassing with any sort of security the horses we are obliged to have constantly in the way, and on which now depends everything, I am still in hopes that we shall ultimately find [that] Mr Connolly with the remainder of the furs will effect the journey to Okanagan by the 10th June. Mr F. Ermatinger wrote to me 3rd April (the day after Mr Yale arrived) that about the 15th that Gentleman was preparing to return to Alexandria with all the horses they could muster about Kamloops, but Jacques [Lafentasia], our interpreter, who came down with the Express did not think he would start before his return. Mr Dease joins with me in the propriety of using at Walla Walla the salmon intended for Mr Connolly's voyage from Okanagan to Kamloops in lieu of the corn and pease Mr Black will otherwise be obliged to resort to. Instead of 2 Boats as Mr McLoughlin directs, I can only for want of a steersman take down one, which will answer all our purpose, because after the different parties are sent off to Kamloops and 2 men to accompany myself from Walla Walla Mr Black will only have 10 men exclusive of his own 5 summer men.

Okanagan, 19 April 1826

To Francis Ermatinger, Thompson River

I arrived here from the Forks of Spokane this morning, accompanied by your brother [Edward Ermatinger] and Mr [John] Work. Edward & I depart tomorrow for the sea [Fort Vancouver] & Mr Work takes Mr Annance's place [at Okanagan] (who in like manner goes down with us)

until you arrive & will then in conformance as I have already observed with Mr Chief Factor McLoughlin's arrangement take charge for the summer.

You already sufficiently well know the nature of our situation at Okanagan to render minute directions unnecessary – I would like however to lay considerable stress on the provisions and means of subsistence at the post for the winter without having recourse to Kamloops or Fraser River. Therefore the salmon is the first consideration, which I believe can be traded to some extent in the months of July & August. The garden is the next object & I am sanguine enough to hope that my own pains in seeing the crop put in the ground & Mr Work's assiduous attention no doubt to that department also, ultimately joined by your own talent & zeal for promoting so laudable an object will almost ensure us a *thriving crop*. Berries & everything else that will serve as part rations ought to be traded on a particular scale. You may also trade a few good horses if not too dear.

The most unlimited assistance is to be given to Mr Connolly & party. In a few days Jos Deslard & the New Caledonia men with an Indian will leave this with thirty horses. The three sent by the men are expressly for carrying *packs*, and at the risk of the Company. I hope this reinforcement will enable you all to get on swimmingly.

Of course you are aware how destructive insects have been about this post during the summer season & will guard against as much as possible. The six Kegs potatoes we could muster here are in the ground, but one I had from Spokane will be sent up by Deslard for enlarging our field at Kamloops – [Jacques] Lafentasia and [Antoine] Bourdignon are the two men that will summer with you. I left open memoranda with Mr Work & you will attend to the things required to go down by the Brigade to be returned to the general store, besides the few furs that may be got in before their departure.

Nez Percés, 17 July 1826

To Francis Ermatinger

We arrived here two days ago after a journey of eleven days from Fort Vancouver. Mr [William] Kittson with three Boats now proceeds to Fort Colville & in meantime brings you a Bale leaf tobacco which I presume is the only article of trading goods you may stand in need of.

Messrs Work, Annance, the two Douglasses [James and David] & myself [along with an interpreter, twenty-eight men and an Indian chief named Charlie] are on the eve of starting to the horse fair at Nez Percés

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Forks, and do not expect to be back here before the 25th.⁹ Consequently our arrival at Okanagan will be at least as late as the 5th or 8th of next month.

I have nothing particular to say in the business of the place. However, that an opportunity *did* offer, I thought you might drop me a line this length.

Nez Percés, 30 July 1826

To Governor George Simpson

It is with infinite pleasure I anticipate your speedy return to the shore of the Pacific, altho there is great reason to apprehend that the unexpected high waters this year will not admit of your descending from the mountains quite as early as was first calculated upon, still everyone is in the full persuasion of seeing you as soon as it is at all practicable.¹⁰

Hitherto this season everything has gone on well in the Columbia, however before we could all proceed to our respective destinations the unaccountable mortality in the New Caledonia horses last winter has again subjected us all to delay in the Nez Percés River, where Messrs Work, [James] Douglas, Annance and myself have now procured upwards of 70, which with our remaining stock at Okanagan ought to suffice for all parties in the Interior, and I believe in all conscience, enough is at hand for the low country. I return from here tomorrow, expecting to join Mr Connolly at Walla Walla in a couple of days. I think we ought to reach OK by the 10th. He of course loses no more time there than is indispensable so I suppose there is no chance of *his* seeing you this season but as my presence is not so very urgent at Thompson River so early I am authorized by Mr McLoughlin to await your arrival to at least the 20th or 25th as the winter operations in our quarter will altogether depend upon the settled plans of the ensuing year for the extension of trade.

⁹ After a sweltering six-day journey from Walla Walla up the Snake River to Nez Percés Forks the group joined a party of about 600 Native people, 'a camp of three different nations ... the Pierced-Nose Indians, the Chewhaption and the Chamniemuchs,' according to David Douglas's journal. After partying and gift-giving late into the first night, the parleying began on the second day, followed by several days of 'singing, dancing, haranguing and smoking, the whole party being dressed in their best garments.' The proceedings were interrupted by an altercation between the interpreter and one of the chiefs that nearly led to warfare. Fortunately the affair was settled amicably, and on the sixth day of the encampment the HBC party set off with a train of seventy healthy new horses.

¹⁰ Apparently Simpson was expected that year, but in fact he did not return to the Columbia until 1828.

This being the case and as it becomes an object to gain knowledge of every sort of communication between the inland posts and the sea, I propose after Mr C's departure to proceed with a few men across as far as the headwaters of Puget Sound which if necessary may be found a convenient communication from that quarter with this part of the Columbia. As I do not consider the distance long, I expect I may be back before the 25th ...

Nez Percés, 30 July 1826

To John Warren Dease, Fort Colville

The extreme scarcity of leather¹¹ at Ft Vancouver this year has rendered our plan entirely dependent on Ft Colville and in addition to the 14 elkskins I had in the spring, I trust you will be able to supply us per the fall canoe with 12 more, a few parchment skins & 200 fathm pack cord, in case Mr Connolly may require the greatest part of what we had in the spring.

In consequence of an order to have Boats built in our quarter this winter [Pierre] LaCourse is again appointed to Thompson River and as I believe we are destitute of almost everything for that purpose I am in hopes you will afford us all the assistance you can in the way of tools &c &c ... I believe LaCourse expects his family down to Okanagan immediately on arrival of Mr Work.

Okanagan, 13 August 1826

To Francis Noel Annance¹²

Although the usual time of proceeding to Thompson River with the Outfit is arrived, certain circumstances will not admit of such a measure at present; however, as it is desirable that some of our people should accompany Mr Connolly & the New Caledonia Brigade as far as Kamloops you & two men are appointed for that purpose.

- Your first & principal object will be to secure as much salmon & berries or anything else in the shape of provisions as possible.

¹¹ Leather hides were used to wrap the fur bales for shipping.

¹² Francis Noel Annance, clerk and interpreter, was McDonald's assistant in the Thompson River District in 1826-27 and, later, at Fort Langley, where he had been one of the founding party. He joined the HBC at the time of the merger in 1821, after a year's service with the NWC. He was part Abenaki from Quebec, was well educated, and spoke several languages. He retired to Montreal in 1834. In 1845 he returned to the Abenaki village of St Francis.

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- The potatoes planted there in the spring will of course require attention if not already destroyed by the Natives.
- As tis possible you will have to move about a little I would wish you to ascertain where the best & most convenient wood for Boat building can be found.
- With respect to the Natives, you are already aware that we have had no reason to be too well satisfied last spring with those in the neighbourhood of the fort. You will therefore treat them (particularly Court Apath & Tranquille [Shuswap chiefs]) with all the indifference consistent with prudence & your own safety. You will have tobacco enough to give them the necessary smoak & all their Beaver trade will be put off until my arrival with the Outfit, not later than the 10th of next month.
- Of course anything you can get done to repair the fort & buildings will be desirable.

Okanagan, 22 August 1826

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

Something like us all, you are no doubt in momentary expectation of seeing Governor Simpson's arrival, but I fear it will all be in vain now – at least until we see the fall Express.

Mr Chief Factor Connolly & myself got here on the 10th with 4 Boats having previously proceeded to Fort Colvile where Mr James Douglas had arrived three days before with sixty of the horses traded at the Nez Percés Forks, of which 15 were made over to Thompson River, & with the remaining 45, & 75 already at this place, Mr Connolly was able to make a start on the 13th with a Brigade of 120 excellent horses including those sold to the men, and about insure his arrival at Alexandria in little more than 20 days. Mr Annance & two of our people accompany them the length of Kamloops & will give what assistance may be required there besides attending to our little interest until I get up.

... You are aware it was my intention to have awaited the governor at this place till at least the 20th and by way of making something of the delay with our men I once thought, had we arrived in time, of making a trip across land towards the headwaters of Puget Sound, but our late arrival, & the idea of being absent should he cast up in the interval prevented the undertaking ... [Instead] five of our men were employed on a trip of six days down to the Pischahoes River, from whence they are just returned with about 500 salmon, enough to keep us all afloat here for a few days, & enable me to take what may suffice for the journey to

Kamloops, which I mean to undertake in 3 or 4 days. By Indian report we are informed that everything there is ruined, but I am of opinion tis something of the old story with a little more exaggeration altho of the potatoes from the circumstance of its being left entirely to its own fate, I am not at all too sanguine.

At this place, if the quantity of potatoes be not overabundant it is certainly sufficiently good to reward all the labour bestowed upon it ... cabbages are beyond expectation, turnips, beet root, onions, peas & melons are worth trial another year. Of Indian corn we shall have a few good heads. Barley may not be wholly hopeless another season, but the wheat has completely failed.

In reference to your letter of 17th ultimo & the man expected for our place, I have now to inform that *two* are required to complete the complement of last year for Louis Satakarota was given to the Rocky Mountain Boat before your letter reached me at Nez Percés Forks, & since that time we have given another Iroquois (Lasard) to Mr Connolly to replace a sick man of his, who is now here & will be sent down in the fall if not in a fit state to go about. As we are not overstocked with *effective* horses, for the greatest part of those that came to our share of those from Nez Percés were unfit to proceed on the journey, I hope more coming for us may be provided at Walla Walla ... It is much to be regretted that the mares cannot be more moderately used at Thompson River – last fall 21 took the stud but this summer we have hardly the prospect of half dozen colts.

LaCourse accompanies me to Kamloops, but nothing will be attempted in the way of Boat building until we hear from you or some other again. Meantime however I send you a small memo of all that may be required from below, should we meet with some little assistance from Ft Colvile – even from LaCourse[’s] own information I am satisfied there is no absolute necessity of having a Blksmith on the spot. I am afraid the transport of Boats from Big OK Lake to the Shuswap Lake will be attended with insurmountable difficulties.

Okanagan, 23 August 1826

To Samuel Black,¹³ Walla Walla

Should there be any men your way bound for this place from Ft Vancouver, you will be good enough to supply them with horses on acct of

¹³ Samuel Black, who served with the NWC from 1804 until the merger, harboured resentment towards the HBC, partly because his appointments as clerk (1823) and, later, chief trader (1824) were delayed due to his reputation as a troublemaker. He

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the district, or if you have a superabundance of them you can now forward a couple by the Indians that accompany Mr Douglas, & in so doing will promote the interest ...

Okanagan, 23 August 1826

To John Warren Dease, Fort Colville

Mr [David] Douglas safely arrived here yesterday morning with your trusty Robidou. He at his own choice embarked in a small canoe with 2 Indians this forenoon that will carry him the length of Walla Walla, where tis to be hoped he will meet with no difficulty to protract his journey downwards.

Robidou will have his leave to return tomorrow & he brings you back in the saddlebags the piece of Russia shirting & ½ doz 14 inch files sent down here as part of your disposable goods last winter ...

Having understood from Mr Douglas that you were much at a loss for plough irons this fall, to extend your already thriving fields at Fort Colville, I shall be happy to let you have the use of a set I had up this summer, & which I cannot myself apply to any improvements this season either here or at Kamloops. Meantime will answer your purpose & Robidou is also the bearer thereof. It is gratifying to hear that your potatoes is in such a thriving state; here there is no reason to complain of the little put in the ground.

Mr [Francis] Ermatinger sends up two or three gunlocks that require some trifling repair at the hand of Pierre Philippe Degras. I cannot say with you that our Beaver trade is tolerable, for as yet nothing could be more miserable. I mean to leave this on the 28th when I shall give up all idea of seeing anyone across the mountains before the usual time of the fall Express. On questioning LaCourse as to the tools required I believe all we shall trouble you for will be a small [illegible] hammer, 2 cold chisels, 1 punch & an old line for making oakum ...

Okanagan, 27 August 1826

To Governor George Simpson

It being now upwards of two weeks since my arrival here & I may say in daily expectation of seeing you, I further delay to no purpose. It was Mr Chief Factor McLoughlin's particular desire that I should this long

became a chief factor in 1837. Black was in charge at Walla Walla (Nez Percés) from 1825 to 1830 and at Kamloops from 1830 until 1841, when he was murdered at the fort by a Native. He was apparently a rather prickly character, and McDonald's letters to him frequently reveal his impatience with Black's demands.

postpone my journey to Thompson River, conscious of the advantage an interview with you might have given us in the event of establishing Fraser River & opening the inland communication by our route.

I leave this tomorrow accompanied by 8 men,¹⁴ & in course of the fall ... will endeavour to visit Thompson River down as far as its confluence with the main stream [Fraser River] ...

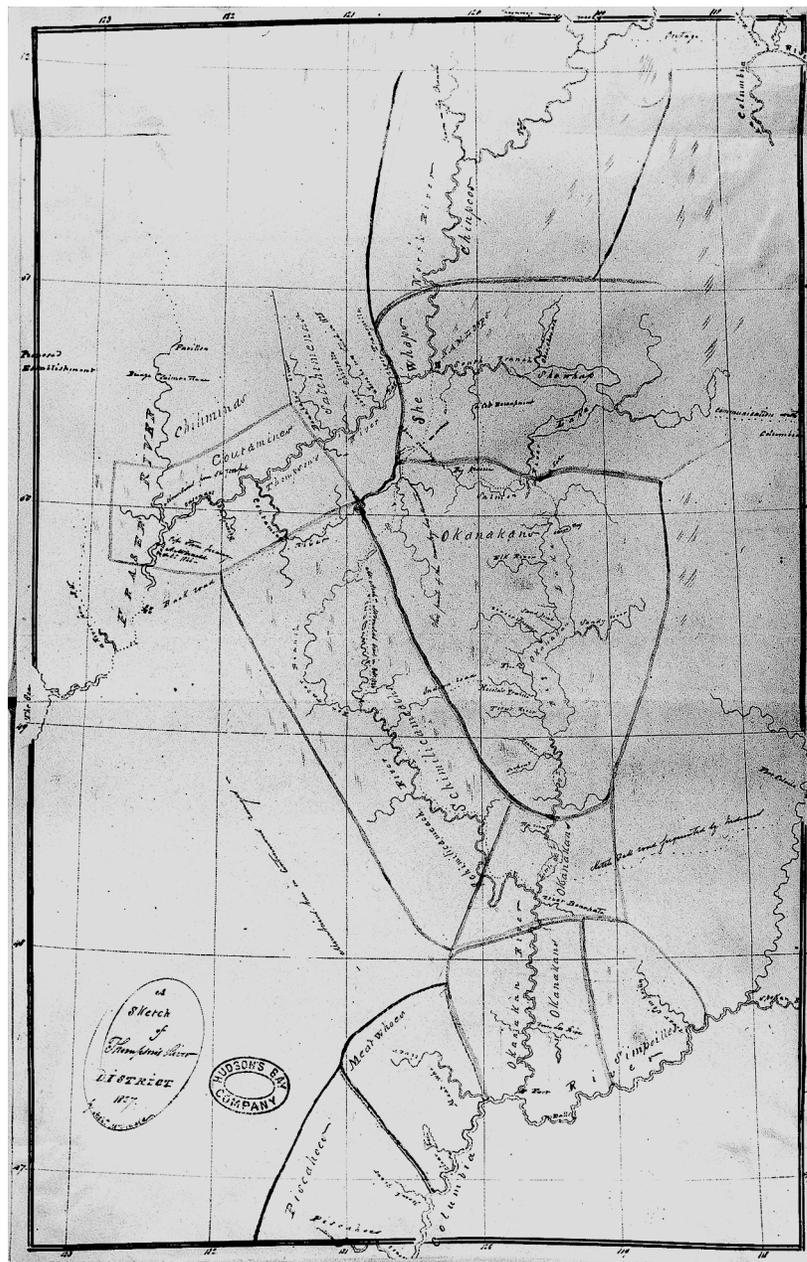
Thompson River, 30 September 1826

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

In conformance with your desire of the 4th July to examine the nature of the water communication from this part of Thompson River down to its confluence with the main stream, I set out accompanied by 8 men & Nicolas [Hwistesmetxe'qen, also known as NKuala], the Upper Okanagan Chief, on Monday the 18th Inst and am happy to inform that in seven days we were back after performing the desired object, an object which I hope may prove satisfactory in the event of the anticipated plans of extending the trade to the northward being carried into execution. They must be considerably facilitated by finding these two rivers navigable for Boats, which I have no hesitation to say is the case, altho not at all seasons of the year.

This river to the mouth of the Coutamine is not bad, & indeed to the little rivulet Nicaumchin there are no very dangerous places; but from there for about five miles down, even when I was there and when the water was greatly fallen, it was nothing but a continuation of cascades & strong rapids. Earlier in the season it would of course present a more formidable appearance, but if this place was the only obstacle, it could with additional exertion be overcome at any time. The fact is, that the nature of those two rivers, rolling down with great rapidity in a narrow bed between immense mountains, generally speaking render their ascent

¹⁴ Not mentioned here is that McDonald was also accompanied by his wife Jane Klyne and her new son Angus, born 1 August at Okanagan; two-year-old Ranald; Annance's wife and son; and the families of seven of the eight men in the party. (Joseph Deslard, Antoine Bourdignon, Alexis Laprade, Joseph Moreau, Jacques Lafentasia and Pierre LaCourse all brought their wives and, among them, a total of ten children. By the following spring four more babies were born at the fort.) After a journey of thirteen days (200 miles), they arrived at Kamloops on 9 September at the head of a train of fifty horses carrying the annual Outfit for the fort. According to McDonald's Journal of Occurrences at Thompson's River, 1826-27 (HBCA B.97/a/2), the Outfit, valued at 200 pounds, included 'Guns, Ammunition, Tobacco, Blankets, Strouds, Brass Kettles, Beaver Traps & Axes.' They were greeted by Annance and two other men who had gone ahead to prepare the fort for their homecoming.



This map of the Thompson River District was drawn by Archibald McDonald in 1827 and was the first map of the interior of British Columbia. On it McDonald outlined the territories occupied by various native tribes in different coloured inks. (Hudson's Bay Company Archives B.97/a/2 fo. 40)

most laborious, & in places in the main river perhaps impossible except at low water.

The two rivers, after their junction, form a stream hardly equal to the Columbia before the Forks of Spokane, & in its progress downwards meets with no considerable water except one river from the N.W. not far from the sea. The last mentioned river is not likely to furnish an easy outlet with the Interior, but the Indians speak of plenty Beaver being along its banks. There is a short communication with it either by the Fokonote River, or from the Bridge by way of the lakes near which it takes its rise.

On arrival at the Forks I was anxious to see the state of the water, but the canoe furnished, & the only one there, proving inefficient we could not go on. I then left the Indian Chief & 4 men with the horses and our little property, & proceeded by land with the interpreter & three Bouts [steersmen] for the span of about 8 miles, which comprehended what the Natives called 2 rapids & one of their dangerous places; on viewing that part of it the rapids proved mere ripples, and when we returned was nothing more than something similar to our little Dalles on the Columbia River, but rather longer with good hauling room at either side.

While at the Dalles, the Natives pointed out to us about 6 leagues off a mountain to the south east at which there was a village where two Chiefs have had some intercourse with Nicolas this summer across land. To that place they said there were no worse places than we had seen, & believe it to the sea the only out & that always passable with the line at low water.

With respect to Fraser River *above* the Forks, I am satisfied from every information I could collect, that the same low state of the water which is necessary for ascending the main river, will also admit a free passage for Boats as high up at least as the Bridge is where we trade our salmon. Nicolas himself once came down by water from there to the Forks.

A convenient land communication from these rivers with the bank of the Columbia being also an object of attention, on my return I left Thompson River at the Nicaumchin & came by the Indian track that leads to the upper Forks of the Okanagan River the length of Nicolas' lodge, which, so far, is passable enough & may with safety be adapted with horses instead of going round by Kamloops. However in parting as high up as the mouth of the Coutamine there would be less danger from the Natives to the craft coming here, & the road across land is equally good & convenient from there.

During the trip we had the good fortune to see but few Indians: their salmon fishing was over, and by that time they were back in the

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mountains after the deer. Some however more anxious to gain our favour represented all the absentees as off for Beaver. Nicolas showed himself among them very jealous for the whites. He exercised his rhetorical fancy among them two or three different times & as I was told much to the purpose: above all things to avoid quarrelling with us. I have advised this Indian to continue his friendship with the two Chiefs from below & to bring them to the fort next time they come his way. By an intercourse of this kind we may soon make a very favourable impression upon the numerous tribes of Indians in the lower part of the river.

About 40 Beaver skins we got in the vicinity of them that came from below to meet us at the Dalles: for a Blanket of blue stroud or one of 2½ pts. they at once gave 6 Beaver & 5 for each of two traps I had & which the Indian from below eagerly caught. Giving the goods at this rate, I conceive no sacrifice made; those, with ammunition & tobacco, were the favourite articles.

It may not be unnecessary to remark that as far as I had seen, the face of the country is wretchedly barren, wholly unfit for any kind of gardens & indeed after the first day's journey, it might be a matter of difficulty to find *room* enough for a fort except at the Forks itself & that would be but a very disadvantageous site for an Establishment.

Herewith I forward a sketch of the river,¹⁵ & the other objects referred to in this report. I had a few good observations for the Lat. and I have reason to suppose that the Long. of the Forks cannot be far wrong. This place is about the same meridian with Okanagan which the inland travellers have placed on or about 120 degrees & I believe the mouth of Fraser River is not far from 123 on Vancouver's survey of the coast. The distance between the triangles or *Trepieds* represent one day's journey on this trip, as well as the ordinary march with loaded horses from Okanagan to here.

P.S. 24 October 1826. On reference to the sketch you will find dotted off my track from Thompson River the other day by Schimilicameach [Similkameen] & where I assumed the Indian path not far from where I left it when coming up the Coutamine. What I have seen of the country there would not discourage me from adopting that passage in preference to go round by Kamloops. I had with me but two men & the Indians were inclined to give some trouble, however with a more formidable force I am convinced they would be passive enough.

¹⁵ HBCA B.97/a/2.

Thompson River, 8 October 1826

To William Connolly, New Caledonia

During my absence from here on 20th ult your son arrived here from below on his way to New Caledonia & was off a couple of days before my return. It however happened that his Indian was unwilling to proceed beyond the Traverse, & they both came back to the fort about three days after. They now again make a fair start and trust nothing will interfere to prevent them reaching your quarter in safety. I am sorry to add that somehow or other William drop'd his letters somewhere between Okanagan & this, if Mr McLoughlin *did* say anything on business cannot refer to his letter. I go down to OK myself on the return of Mr Annance from Fraser River,¹⁶ & hope to find there sufficient directions should the contemplated plan of extending the trade be adopted. There will be horses enough to attend to your memo should the leather & cord be still forwarded by way of the Columbia.

Agreeable to Mr McLoughlin's orders I visited this river down to the Forks, which is perfectly navigable for Boats when the state of the water suits the working of them in other parts of the communication¹⁷ ... the Natives however say that a worse place is near to the sea, but always with the advantage of using the line coming up & never necessary to carry the Boats going down. So much for navigation in lower part of the river – tis to be hoped that the upper will not prove insurmountable.

Thompson River, 8 October 1826

To James M. Yale, Fort Alexandria

I forward you a note, although I have nothing particular to communicate; William [Connolly Jr] will verbally give you the news all the way from Fort Vancouver to Alexandria & poor fellow he'll require it for

¹⁶ Annance had gone with a party of men to Fraser River to procure a supply of salmon from the Natives fishing there.

¹⁷ This proved to be untrue. When McDonald went down the Thompson and Fraser Rivers with Simpson in October 1828, according to his journal they found the route to be a treacherous series of rapids, whirlpools, and eddies 'at least half the distance embedded in solid rock.' See Malcolm McLeod, ed., *Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific, by the late Sir George Simpson in 1828. Journal of the late Chief Factor Archibald McDonald ... who accompanied him* (Ottawa: Durie and Son, 1872). Simpson pronounced it unsuitable as a 'practicable communication ... having three of the most experienced Bowsmen in the country ... I consider the passage down to be certain Death, in nine attempts out of Ten.' See E.E. Rich, ed., *Simpson's 1828 Journey to the Columbia: Part of a Dispatch from George Simpson ESQr Governor of Rupert's Land* (Toronto: Champlain Society and London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1947).

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unluckily he dropt on the way up from OK to here all his written news ... The Indian that accompanied him received payment from 12 to 15 skins. It is unnecessary to return by the Indian the identical horse for I suppose some will be required this fall again by your people to go from here to Alexandria.

Thompson River, 12 October 1826

To the Officer Commanding HBC at Mouth of Fraser River

I am just returned from examining the river down to a short distance below the Forks, which am happy to acquaint you is so far likely to answer our purpose. I send this by two Indians I invited up from there, & who promise to forward it without fail should they hear of the Whites being established at the mouth of the river.¹⁸ All is well in this quarter. I go down to Okanagan in a couple of days, & then expect to hear of the intended operations for the ensuing year.

Okanagan, 17 October 1826

To John Warren Dease, Fort Colvile

... I came down to meet the Express after returning from an expedition down Fraser River, & Mr Annance and three men making another trip for the salmon to the usual place. I was fortunate to get here 24 hours before the arrival of Mr McMillan & friends, when I was kindly favoured with yours. I have now to thank you for the effort made to procure us the leather, am however rather disappointed not sending us that pack cord, an article so much required in the present transport of salmon, & of which, some are now sent down with several Bales to Walla Walla out of the few we had & more will be required for that purpose in course of the season. Parchment we can do without but at the expense of shutting up all our windows. However we are aware of your own great demand this year in that article ...

Okanagan, 24 October 1826

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

The anxiety I felt at Thompson River increased by the loss of the last letter, induced me to make a trip this length immediately on the return of our people from Fraser River and arrived two days ago. Then & only then I found every document addressed to me both by yourself & Mr Black in the subject of tobacco, salmon, boat rivets &c &c.

¹⁸ McDonald thought Fort Langley was being built that year, but it was delayed until the summer of 1827.

The arrival of tobacco from the other side obviates that part of the subject, but Mr Black's Bale is nevertheless sent down. As for the salmon, it is clear that I could not have any idea of the scarcity at Walla Walla ... However of 1,600 that came down for goers & comers, 500 are sent by Mr McMillan & Mr Black is informed that he can have any quantity he may require at this place by middle of December. With respect to the building of Boats, I find it can be dispensed with for one year: yet, the certainty of their being required the following season may render it desirable that something towards that object might be attended to this winter also, but this nor any other real improvements cannot be commenced without a small summer Establishment, when a couple of men would be quite secure.

By the Minutes of Council it would appear that many changes are in contemplation with respect to the Columbia Gentlemen ... I am not likely to be here any more this season. We have no copy of the Minutes of Council, but took a few extracts of such as may in part be applicable to ourselves.

The present conveyance affords the opportunity of forwarding to you a short report with a rough sketch of the country from Thompson River Establishment down to the Forks of Fraser River, which agreeable to your request I visited this fall. The result of which I have also transmitted for the information of Mr Chief Factor Connolly.

Okanagan, 24 October 1826

To Samuel Black, Walla Walla

On my arrival here two days ago, I was favoured with the various communications made by yourself & Mr McLoughlin on the subject of tobacco, salmon, &c. And have now to acquaint you that the Bale of leaf consigned to you in the summer ... is sent down ...

When I left Thompson River of course I would not have been aware of the scarcity at Walla Walla & consequently made no provision for you; however of 1,600 salmon that came down, Mr McMillan takes 500 in the Boats for you & as I apprehend no want in our quarter, you may send up here for any quantity by the 15th or 20th of December.

What I said to you of horses meant nothing more than merely to facilitate the journey of such people as are expected up, especially as I anticipated they would be encumbered with iron works. As it is, not furnishing *one* horse to carry the rivets here, occasioned their being left a second time on the way, & only arrived three days ago after being sent for to Priest's Rapid & incurred expenses equal to half the price of a horse ...

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Thompson River, 22 November 1826

To James M. Yale, en route from New Caledonia

Late this evening the Indian safely handed me the packet with your kind note dated at the *Pavilion* on the 19th and it is with infinite satisfaction I learn that so far you descended this river well & found it possible to be navigated with Boats. The lateness of the season is certainly against the undertaking, but with favourable change in the weather of late & the probability of meeting with fewer obstacles the nearer you get to the Forks will enable you to make a good march ere the Indian can return to the *Pavilion*. He tells me you have settled to meet him in ten days, but whether at the same place or higher up at the Falls I cannot make out. However we shall endeavour as much as possible to put off signing accounts with him here that he may have an inducement of his own to carry you the returned packet [of letters]. One of our men will accompany him unless Mr Annance (whom of course you must have fallen in with) will judge that the Indian alone cannot but find you out. Our people left this on the 15th & they must have been at Fraser River about the 19th.

I shall be happy to hear of your further success. Letters left anywhere between the *Pavilion* & the Falls will be sure to find the way here.

Thompson River, 23 November 1826

To William Connolly, New Caledonia

An Indian arrived here late last night from Mr Yale ... Mr McMillan & friends arrived safe at Okanagan where I met them on the 24th ... The warlike passion which at present rages so fatally among the Indians of Alexandria and the surrounding tribes is unfortunate & cannot fail to produce consequences highly detrimental to the trade.¹⁹ If the Returns fail at Thompson River we must trace the cause to some other source, which [I] am afraid is not so easily removed, as a reconciliation is brought about with the hostile party; with us the Beaver have actually vanished.

As tis possible there will be no other conveyance between us this winter, I take it for granted that the arrangement of last spring will be adopted in the ensuing one, as far as regards our having a sufficient force to take care of the provisions until your arrival & find the means of forwarding the outgoers to Okanagan, whom I presume are not likely to be here before I leave. You may rely on finding some fresh horses at this place & perhaps we may have it in our power to send a vessel or two to

¹⁹ Both the Carrier in the vicinity of Fort St James and the Babine farther west had a long history of hostile behaviour towards European traders.

meet the Brigade at North River Traverse. We have now a couple under way altho they are not actually required for the first season, but the Boat builder is on the spot & we may as well give them a trial. It is possible Mr McLoughlin will authorize this man to be left here for the summer, as something of the kind is indispensable another year.

Thompson River, 3 December 1826

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

... I am now happy to inform that less what the post of Okanagan itself may require, about 3,000 salmon is sent down [for Samuel Black] on this occasion. The last trip however to Fraser River has not been so successful as we anticipated. Mr Annance found the Natives more troublesome than heretofore & nowise inclined to trade with their usual unreserved disposition. Without giving them any offence on his part, the next morning after he got there, he had the mortification to find that two of our horses were shot by them during the night and assigned as the reason, without asking the malcontents, that it was in revenge of former grievances received at the hand of the whites. Mr James Yale & eight men from New Caledonia happened to arrive at our people's camp that very day & they all thought the best plan was to procure the salmon in mean time, but even this was effected with some difficulty & shyness on the part of the Natives and ultimately traded not above $\frac{2}{3}$ of the quantity required. On the eve of their departure our people again had some trouble with them & to extricate themselves the party would be compelled to fire; but as good luck would have it the New Caledonians after destroying their canoe & giving up the idea of returning by water, again unexpectedly joined our people, when all [the Indians] were obliged to scamper, but not before 2 or 3 of them had got some corporal chastisement & two others suspected of being concerned in the killing of the horses were deprived of their guns. Thus rests the business at present.

It may be proper to observe that since the reduction in our Establishment of men, it was customary to send no more than six for the salmon, which were considered few enough; but the last trip Mr A. was under the necessity of leaving one on the way in consequence of his having received a kick from one of the horses & this reduced his party to five. The next time we send, which will be some time in Febry the party will consist of a Gentleman and at least eight men. Before that time as the trip to F.R. may be unsuccessful, we shall try down this same stream where, from appearances in the fall, we may get some salmon. I am aware of the advantage a good supply in this article would give us in the upper part of the Columbia next spring, but unless we succeed in getting at

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least 6,000 pieces yet, we cannot be relied on to furnish any to the Express or Walla Walla. Exclusive of what is going down now we have at present in store 5,000 salmon.

With respect to Beaver I am sorry to say that present appearances only confirm that they fall short of last year's trade in the same proportion that Thompson River returns have diminished within these four years back. The Natives seem well disposed & many of them during the fall made unsuccessful efforts; the fact is this, Beaver have been incredibly scarce.

By a perusal of Mr Chief Factor Connolly's general letter to the Factors & Traders herewith forwarded ... we are acquainted with the probability of his being this year at Okanagan by the first of June, & the quantity of salmon required to take him hence to there, & I hope nothing depending upon us will protract their progress. We shall in like manner provide for their retiring servants but they ought not to leave this later than the 1st of April so as to reach Okanagan by the 12th, which period the Express may probably find late enough. As for myself, unless I am directed by you to the contrary, I shall leave this with a few men about the 15th or 20th of March, so as to be some days at Okanagan before the arrival of the Express.

Mr Yale, agreeable to directions from Mr Chief Trader [Joseph] McGillivray, came down Fraser River the length of the Bridge, where he found our people. He wrote to me by an Indian from the *Pavilion* (15 miles above the Bridge) dated 19th Nov. in which he says 'The river thus far is navigable by Boat but not without much difficulty & danger: for these three days back it was full of drifting ice; it is now however nearly clear again.' The Indian was returned the morning of the 24th with the N. Caledonia letters ...

The 4 Boats left at Okanagan last autumn will be forthcoming, which with 2 at Fort Colvile are all I believe we have to depend on, unless one or two left at Walla Walla might be made to answer if required. Here we have all the wood necessary for two new ones brought home & sawed; they may possibly be of service in the spring to meet the New Caledonians up North River, however they must be left to the mercy of the Indians if a couple of men, as I have already hinted, are not to remain for the summer. Till that is the case, neither will it be worthwhile to make any further attempts at gardening.

Thompson River, 3 December 1826

To John Warren Dease, Fort Colvile

Three of our men are just about starting for Okanagan with salmon

for Mr Black so as to meet his people [from Walla Walla] there about the 15th, the time we have reason to expect letters from below ...

As usual in our hammering about after salmon, Mr Annance a few days after my return made another trip to Fraser River, but was not quite so successful as we had reason to expect. The Indians all along the upper part of that river were in a complete state of warfare & it would seem the flame in great measure has caught those we visit in this lower part also ... While our people were at Fraser River they fell in with Mr Yale & eight men from Alexandria visiting the river ... In his descent he did not see the Indians with whom it was also an important object to have a conference on the nature of the commotions among them in the vicinity of Alexandria ...

As the old Boats will require much repairing, we shall expect gum down by the first opportunity.

Thompson River, 3 December 1826

To Samuel Black, Walla Walla

... we now send down 2,800 salmon of which Mr Ermatinger is directed to let your people have from 1,500 to 2,000 if you require them, & possibly in the spring we may be able to let you have a few hundred more.

By the public correspondence of Messrs Connolly & McGillivray you will see the extent of their trouble with the Indians in that quarter & we ourselves have had some difficulty with those of Fraser River also ...

Thompson River, 3 December 1826

To Francis Ermatinger, Okanagan

Our people returned from Fraser River about six days ago, altho their trip was not to the full extent of our expectations, yet I hope [André] Picard will be at you to a day, that Mr Black's people, should he send up for the salmon, may not be detained a single hour. To avoid any misunderstanding as to the quantity intended for him, I have left my letter open for your guide ...

Lafentasia comes up in the room of Picard & I see no necessity for their remaining in expectation of the Express from below later than the 25th ... Should any letters from Fort Vancouver ... arrive after that date, perhaps to avoid unnecessary expense with Indians you could find it convenient to come up with them yourself. Keep down such horses as you think will not be in good condition to accompany me in March; I fear some of them are affected with the strangles as is the case with many of those here now.

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Thompson River, 23 December 1826

To Joseph McGillivray, Fort Alexandria

... the Indian entrusted with the letters ... at length, about ten days ago ... cast up with his packet &, according to his own story, a deplorable account of his privations during a fruitless chase after Mr Yale, who in my opinion was rather sanguine in expecting [to be] back to the ... river by the 24th, the Indian that left him at the *Pavilion* on 19th ...

In sending the letters now, I avail myself of the return of another Indian from your own quarter who tells me that the object of his returning is pressing – no less than the laudable purpose of apprising you of a meditated plan of the Tsilcoutines [Chilcotins] to attack your fort & in particular to revenge some insult offered to their tribe of late by John, your interpreter, whose relations here urge the speedy departure of the bearer ... We are at present honoured with the company of all the idle Indians on those streams from below the forks to the very Rocky Mountains. They are now engaged in one of their grand Banquets [*] at the special invitation of Court Apath and altho they are by no means troublesome yet our attention is diverted from any other object.

Following is an excerpt from McDonald's Journal of Occurrences at Thompson River, 1826-27.

Sunday 17th [December] – During the night & this morning 3 to 4 inches of snow fell ... but still mild weather ... Had an early visit from 30 of the Coutamines ... traded about 20 Beaver, a few pieces dried salmon & eight dogs ... smoaked with us the whole day ...

Monday 18th – Ascertain total number of population (Coutamines) – they furnished me with a small piece of stick for every grown man of their community, with few exceptions each has a wife, seldom more, children must be averaged from more accurate statement taken of other tribes.

Wednesday 20th – Everything being prepared to commence the grand banquet, we all had an invitation from Court Apath this afternoon, but for the present myself only and one of the Canadians attended. It is much to be regretted that the object of this kind of jubilee (not uncommon among the Natives here) is not better understood by the Europeans, & am sorry to say that I am not likely to throw any additional light on the subject – not a word of the Native language here can anyone attached to the Company's service speak. All our little dealing with them is done thro the medium of the Okanagan ...

On arrival at the camp I saw for the first time the Basin [hollow depression] the Chief had constructed for the express purpose of this entertainment – its dimension at base is 45 feet square with an upright

wall of about 4, and then the roof running to a point in the centre, to answer the purpose of a door. To this aperture is fixed up nearly perpendicular, a stout stick of about 18 ft. notched at convenient distances to serve as a ladder ... gang of stark naked fellows actively engaged in lowering down by means of slings from 20 to 25 of their waterproof baskets, smocking hot with thin soups, none of them less than 10 gallons & some considerably more. In mean time as many were already busily employed below cutting up the most excellent dried Beaver & venison laid up at the expense of much labour & privation to themselves solely for the purpose since autumn – bear's fat, both raw and melted ... & roots of every description peculiar to this part of the country ready for distribution.

The guests, near upon 300 men, sat upon the ground as thick as they could ... round & round this subterranean habitation, leaving very little space for the attendants, who by the bye let it be observed were not the most contemptible of the Shewhaps & even Court Apath himself was by no means an idle spectator altho his labour did not extend beyond mere superintendence. Every man was furnished with the cheekbone of salmon for his spoon, & the soup kettles, consisting of berries, roots, grease, pounded fish, salmon roe, &c &c being planted here & there among them, they fell to & soon emptied their dishes. These spacious reservoirs the Shewhaps Chief & other personages in attendance made it a point to taste a portion of each before the hungry visitors commenced the attack. The next course was each a lump of suet, after which the Beaver & venison with a raw piece of bear's fat; & lastly the roots. This ceremony occupied about two hours, when I enabled them to resume the pipe, which being some time indulged in, the devouring organs were again called to action & to continue alternately with the pipe for at least 24 hours.

It is a universal rule with them on such occasions that the guest must eat all put before him, & if this task be too much another is imposed – that of carrying it with him. This (being liberally supplied with the most substantial part of the eatables) was unluckily the case with myself today, but the constant dry salmon at home rendered [it] more agreeable than painful. Those who come from a distance are by this law much beholden to their good appetite & to their still better powers of digestion, but I believe before the feast is over seldom the latter is found capable of performing its functions, & the consequence is what naturally might be expected. This heaving up scene affords the host (evidence absolutely necessary) the most convincing proof of their being treated to their heart's content.

They have been dancing for the last 48 hours, which I believe necessarily carries with it a system of fasting. During the dance presents were

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exchanged. The Coutamines gave 3 or 4 horses, Guns & Hayques [haiqua shells used as currency]. The Shewhaps returned the compliment with Guns, Robes, Beads & a few Beaver traps. I observed hung up in the Banquet Hall what they told me were appendages belonging to some of the deceased relations of Court Apath & friends, which in the progress of the dance were often saluted with loud peals of mourning & lamentations. During this rendezvous it is also an object with them to pledge their friendship with each other, altho religion is no doubt the primary consideration.

Before quitting this grand affair, I acknowledged the good behaviour of the Coutamines when I was among them [and] intimated our intention of soon going that way again for salmon, & the probability of the whites by & bye passing thro their country with Boats &c &c, all of which seemed to leave them with sentiments of additional regard for us. The rest of our people crossed to the camp in the evening. None of the Okanagans attended & but very few of the Schimilicameach [Similkameens].

Thursday 21st – A few of the Coutamines left the camp early this morning, but those good fellows that swallowed most of last night's emetic are still on the ground.

Friday 22nd – The six principal Indians from below came across this morning to see us before their departure – took their names & gave each a ½ yard green Beads, a corn scalper & ½ head leaf tobacco.

Thompson River, 30 December 1826

To Chief Factor Connolly and Chief Trader McGillivray, Alexandria

Five days after the opportunity that last occurred to Alexandria, the Fort Vancouver winter Express arrived, which we forward without delay. Meantime I transmit our account this season with New Caledonia & the few articles supplied [to] individuals, which latter are charged at the winter price, but should it be more regular to charge the District with the whole at the 70 p.c. we are agreeable. I am not informed how such accounts are disposed of at our depot, & I beg Mr McGillivray may be good enough to acquaint me by the first conveyance. Our Boatbuilder is recalled to Fort Colvile for it is supposed that craft will still be required next summer for the Columbia. I see Mr McLoughlin is anxious that Fraser R. should be examined in the spring, but with the returned packet he is acquainted with all the information I have had from Mr Yale on that head.

Thompson River, 6 January 1827

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

I was favoured with yours of the 18th Novr on the return of our

people from Okanagan 30th Ult & as Mr Annance, who was then absent with six men at the Coutamine for salmon, did not return before the 4th, LaCourse was not, agreeable to your request, to have taken his departure for Fort Colvile before now. A partial failure in the last trip having subjected us to another attempt to Fraser River for the salmon when our horses are sufficiently recovered, but perhaps at a time it would be too late for him to answer your purpose below. I also give Mr Annance himself his leave now, that they may go in company to Okanagan. I trust Lafentasia & myself will do what is to be done till the spring. This moment we have not quite 5,000 salmon in store here, & but a few hundred at OK. By Mr Black's tone of perfect indifference about this article, I should almost think he is putting us to unnecessary trouble ...

Our Returns here may possibly come up with last year's trade yet, but Okanagan is miserable. I beg your advice in the spring how we are to take credit for the horses charged to this Outfit last year. An Indian left us with the New Caledonia packet on the 1st & is now not far from Alexandria. I perceive your anxiety to have Fraser River examined down to the Forks; it must therefore afford you much satisfaction in perusing my last to see that that task was already performed at the desire of Mr Chief Factor Connolly; & Mr Yale's note to me ... will now tend to remove many of your serious apprehensions on that head.

With respect to the men whose time will expire in the spring 1828 (none are free in 1827) & bound by their last contract to give twelve months' notice of their intention then, I beg leave to submit for your information the following list & reply viz:

Jac. Lafentasia – Interpreter – In debt – has no thought of leaving the country
 Pierre LaCourse – Boatbuilder – At present is of opinion to visit Canada
 Alexis LaPrade – Middleman – Will reengage & trusts no objection to him as Bout
 Ant. Bourdignon – Middleman – Finds himself getting weak for the service
 Laurent Karonhitihigo – Bout – A good Bout & might be employed
 Louis Shoegaskatsta & Lasard Onahargon – Middlemen – These two are not
 adapted for this place & should go out
 Pierre Satakarass – from N.C. is a noneffective man

P.S. On second thought, if nothing below absolutely requires his presence, I have directed Mr Francis Ermatinger to come up, that one of us may accompany the people to Fraser River, & especially to reconcile our late difference with the Natives there. Indeed am of opinion that another year the post of Okanagan might be kept up without a Gentmn resident there at all.

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Thompson River, 6 January 1827

To Francis Ermatinger, Okanagan

I make no doubt you will be surprised at seeing two of our principal personages at Kamloops pop in upon you, but such are the orders from headquarters by the last packet. LaCourse proceeds without delay to Fort Colvile & his plan is to be supplied by a middleman from Mr Work. Now if you have nothing particular requiring your presence at Okanagan & your health perfectly recovered I should be glad to see you up here on arrival of Mr Annance, who continues his journey to Fort Vancouver, where Picard is joined by the man coming from Ft Colvile. Mr A. has time enough and can remain at least 20 days. Should he go down by land let him take Mr Black's mare, or if she is unfit, you can give another in her stead, that we may have no more horses changed so in this season. In mean time let Mr B. *again* be informed that we are absolutely in want of the pack cords. Send Mr Work an account of the boat irons we have at OK in case he may require them. Get LaCourse to examine the Boats below, & secure what hoops, nails &c may be required for their repair. Bring up all the saddles with their proportion of appèchements, & what cords you can gather. We also want up 10 yds blue strouds & the same quantity of red baise. With further reference to Mr Annance.

Thompson River, 5 February 1827

To Francis Noel Annance

On leaving this I was not aware of any particular objection to your proceeding to Fort Vancouver immediately on the arrival at Okanagan of the man coming from Fort Colvile in the room of LaCourse, but I have now to request, in consequence of directions contained in Mr Chief Factor McLoughlin's memorandum ... that you remain at Okanagan until the return of Mr Ermatinger from hence ...

Thompson River, 12 February 1827

To Francis Noel Annance

There being no chance of any letters arriving from New Caledonia in time to go down to Fort Vancouver before the departure of the Express, you will of course proceed with the Flathead & Fort Colvile letters without delay. Mr Ermatinger expects to get down in ten days.

Thompson River, 12 February 1827

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

... behold, on the evening of the 7th our Indian returned with only a

couple private letters from Mr McGillivray which did not in the least hint that he had forwarded the packet ... or that he was at all aware of the importance you attached to an answer. It is therefore in vain to look for any returned letters from that quarter before the outgoers come on, & Mr Ermatinger accordingly leaves us tomorrow, that Mr Annance may proceed with the Flathead & Fort Colvile letters without delay.

This conveyance affords me the opportunity of giving you an exact idea of our stock of salmon now, which my last two letters left entirely in suspense. Before the arrival of Mr Ermatinger, the interpreter & seven men had safely returned from Deases River with 3,000 and we are now enabled to meet all demands, should you even appropriate enough to take the Express on to Fort Colvile & 5 or 600 yet to Nez Percés (if required) to save the conveyance of grain from below. It is with satisfaction I also add that our people are again well received by the Indians & that matters touching the old troubles have been amicably settled.

By the last account from Alexandria dated 16th Janry their horses were in good condition, & but little snow then on the ground. Mr McGillivray also intimated that all their endeavours to bring about a reconciliation with the Natives have proved unavailing – the Chilcotins refused their presents & interference altogether.

Thompson River, 14 March 1827

To George McDougall, New Caledonia

As I understand you are to pass this way in a few days with the New Caledonia retiring servants so as to be at Okanagan by the 10th or 12th April to meet the Columbia Express, I hope my being away will be no disappointment. Lafentasié, the interpreter, who remains here, is directed to give you every requisite accommodation as far as salmon for the party to go down with & horses to carry it, besides a horse or two for your own use may be considered as such. I leave this tomorrow & will be happy to see you at Okanagan by the appointed time.

P.S. I am sorry I have not the pleasure of your company down, & am afraid the lateness of the time proposed for your people to meet the Express leaves but little chance of your being with us any time before their arrival from below. I request you will without ceremony help yourself out of what little stores I leave here.

Thompson River, 14 March 1827

To William Connolly, Alexandria

Your packet of the 6th February is just arrived here, which however is too late to reach Mr Chief Factor McLoughlin before the departure of the York Factory Express.

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I am exceedingly sorry to find that you have the mode of conducting these Expresses so universally condemned.²⁰ With respect to myself and the peculiar situation of the two posts under my charge ... I hope I shall always be found an avowed advocate for due economy. I am aware of woollens being the invariable demand about Okanagan, but if it is insisted upon to be less, I fear our Indian couriers will be more uncertain than they have been.

I also beg leave to exonerate myself as to time. Mr McLoughlin's packet of the 20th Novr reached Okanagan 13th Decr & left this on 1st January, upwards of ten weeks ago; I take the liberty of making this comparison to show that delay is not entirely confined to that part of the communication south of this, & I believe Mr McLoughlin will attribute *his* disappointment to something of this kind also. I sincerely hope that the conspicuous situation in which I am placed myself, & of course a good share of every conspicuous remonstrance levelled against any misconduct or inattention on the communication, justifies this explanation.

I leave this tomorrow morning, but two men remain in charge of the salmon until your arrival. It is also probable that some of us will meet you at the North River Traverse with a canoe by the 10th May. From the favourable account of Alexandria we make no provision here for transport to Okanagan. All ours [horses] are exceedingly poor & several died.

P.S. The letters arrived late in the evening by one of our Indians on *horseback*, who fell in with the regular courier in the morning, unable to gain the fort today.

Okanagan, 9 April 1827

To John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver

Independent of our little accounts which are already closed & forwarded, I now send you all the public documents connected with Thompson River which I conceive required by the Governor & Council. To the Journal is subjoined all the correspondence and a Map of the District. Agreeable to your request the Report is also transmitted.

[McDonald's Thompson River District Report, dated at Okanagan, 5 April 1827 (HBCA B/97/e/1), is published in Simpson's 1828 *Journey to the Columbia: Part of a Dispatch from George Simpson ESQr to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company London*, by the Champlain Society and Hudson's Bay Record Society in 1947.]

²⁰ The preceding letters illustrate the difficulties and pitfalls of the communication system in the Columbia; often letters were slow to pass from hand to hand, and sometimes they failed to reach their destination at all.



Chief Trader Archibald McDonald Descending the Fraser River, 1828, by A. Sherriff Scott. (Hudson's Bay Company Archives P-408 N8093)