



York Factory, chief depot of the Hudson's Bay Company, as it appeared at the height of its influence in 1853. The first building on this site was started in 1788 although earlier structures of the same name had been in the area since 1682. The Factory finally closed in 1957. Lithograph of a sketch by Chief Factor Alexander Hunter Murray. (*The Public Archives of Canada and the Hudson's Bay Company*)

Cook's midshipmen during this last voyage was George Vancouver (1757-1798). In 1791, as a Commander, Vancouver was sent to take control of the west coast from the Spaniards. From a base at Nootka Sound, he spent two years exploring the coasts of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Vancouver narrowly missed meeting Alexander Mackenzie of the North-West Company who arrived at the head of Bella Coola inlet, on July 20, 1793, from Lake Athabaska. Mackenzie arrived at the Pacific just three weeks after Vancouver's exploring and surveying ships had passed.

In the years that followed it was mainly the senior wintering partners of the North-West Company who explored British Columbia. Simon Fraser (1776-1862) with tremendous fortitude and courage worked his way down the Fraser River in 1808 to tidewater. David Thompson (1770-1857) spent much of his life between 1798 and 1812 establishing new fur trading areas and working out the geography of the far western plains and especially the complexities of the Columbia River. The great enterprise that had sponsored all of these expeditions was the North-West Company of Montreal. This great Canadian company was finally amalgamated with the more efficient Hudson's Bay Company, operating from York Factory in Hudson Bay, in 1821.

During the War of 1812 the North-West Company had occupied and purchased, under threat of seizure, the American Fort Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River. This fort had been established by John Jacob Astor's fur company, and ended his adventures in the Oregon country. This area, around the lower Columbia in what are now the states of Washington and Oregon, was largely held by British Canadian interests, represented after 1821 by the Hudson's Bay Company. It was to continue there until the gradual drift of American settlers into the Willamette valley in the late 1830s and early 1840s made the position of the Company more difficult. The Oregon Boundary Treaty of 1846 forced the Hudson's Bay Company to move its trans-Rocky Mountain operations to Fort Victoria at the southern end of Vancouver Island.

2.2.4 The War of 1812

The War of 1812 was a war the Americans thought they won, the Canadians believed they won, and the British, who did no small share of fighting, have largely forgotten about. The war was caused by two disparate elements in the United States. There were those who were incensed at the occasionally harsh treatment of American merchant ships and seamen on the