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## Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818.

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*Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818.* Edited and with an introduction by W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. Maps, illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. xx+354 pp. \$29.95.

The permanent villages of farming Indians on the Upper Missouri were a central focus for trade in prehistoric times. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, both French and Spanish traders had reached the area, and by the early nineteenth century, the Mandan-Hidatsa villages had come to be a Parisian entrepot for the buffalo hunting tribes, the St. Louis and Canadian traders, and the artists and explorers of young America. While the drive up the Missouri from St. Louis is well documented, Wood and Thiessen have unveiled for us an exciting story of the important and early Canadian connection of North Dakota's Mandan-Hidatsa towns.

The book has two major parts. First, a brilliant and concise introduction gives us a history of the Canadian-Missouri River trade and explanations of how and why the trade was conducted. A concluding chapter is the best synopsis yet written of the tragic Mandan-Hidatsa collapse from disease and warfare. The second section is a wonderful retranscription of the narratives of John Macdonell, David Thompson, Francois-Antoine Larocque, and Charles McKenzie, sweeping clean transla-

tions, transcriptions, and expurgations that had rendered these journals more hindrance than help to scholars. The new transcriptions are chock full of exciting ethnographic and historical information. These narratives document visits by North West Company employees to the Upper Missouri predating or contemporary with the fabled Lewis and Clark expedition. They delineate the intense competition of the Hudson's Bay Company and provide some important insights into the Indians' side of meeting the American captain-explorers.

The editing is precise and professional. Each of the narratives is preceded by an interpretive introduction which sets forth a synopsis of the author's life, the history of the manuscript itself, and various useful technical data which help to authenticate and date the transcribed material. Each journal has excellent annotations along with editorial corrections and original pagination.

Reading and transcribing faded nineteenth century manuscripts in the antiquated hands of different scribes is at best an unenviable task. Wood and Thiessen have expended tremendous effort to produce new, more precise copies of the journals. Despite the obvious care involved, there seem to be some mistranscriptions. For example, in Larocque's "Yellowstone Journal" (page 215), the ends of the Indians' leggings should probably be "tucked" rather than "tacked" in their belts, and they are probably wearing "leather" as opposed to the recorded "feather" belts.

The book is appointed with thirteen carefully selected illustrations including site photographs, trade goods, original documents, and topographic details. There are three excellent maps and six superb tables covering such subjects as documented Canadian fur trade trips to the North Dakota Indian villages, types of trade goods being sold, and applicable trading post inventories.

All in all, it is easy to commend the editors and to give a congratulatory nod to the University of Oklahoma Press. I unhesitatingly recommend this volume to Plains archeolo-

gists, anthropologists, and historians, but it should have a far wider audience. Its quality of research, data, and production will make it a professional standard.

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