

The Beaver -

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It is interesting to note that the history of Canada has been profoundly influenced by the habits of an animal which fittingly occupies a prominent place on her coat of arms - The beaver, it was of dominant importance in the beginnings of the Canadian fur trade - (Because of this I would like to refresh your memories of this busy little animal).

Humorous descriptions of the beaver are found in early French accounts - Le Clerg wrote "the beaver is of the bigness of a water-spaniel. Its fur is chestnut black and even white but always very soft and suitable for the making of hats" - The color varieties is largely the result of climate, becoming darker in the more northerly latitudes.

As with other animals, the fur is much thinner and poorer in Summer -

The fur of the beaver, like that of the other animals may be divided into two parts; the guard hair up to two inches in length, and the under hair or fur at most an inch - This is the part unusually suitable for the manufacture of felt and felt hats -

The animal weighs from thirty to sixty pounds - His meat is agreeable, although fat and oily - the tail a delicacy - The average pelt weighs one $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 lbs. - The beaver is a monogamist. The young are born in May and average from 2-5 in number - They mate at two - A beaver ~~has~~^{animals} has generally about nine of varying ages. It is estimated that the beaver population increases by about 20 per cent per year - and that previous to the coming of the Europeans the total population of North America was ten millions - As you are know, it does not hibernate but makes elaborate

preparation for winter quarters, dams are built ensuring water supply, caches for wood storage which is their chief food. and their lodges veritable forts of wood and mud.

The simple weapons of the Indians were no match for the rapacious beaver. But with the coming of the European with iron and guns the beaver was soon vanquished - Their houses pierced thru, dams cut thru, and the water run off -

With this destruction in the ^{the fur trade} ~~the~~ ^{eastern} part of North America came the necessity of pushing westward and north westward to tap new areas.

The fur trade problem was now one of organization - necessitated by the transportation of surplus and from greater distances.

In this movement the waterways of the beaver area were of primary importance and occupied a vital place in the economic development of northern North America -

Let us touch on these first men of the Frontier

The very early French fur trade along the sea coast was limited, being secondary to the fishing industry. Along the St Lawrence, Cartier tells us trading in a but or miers manner began with the Indians around 1534. He describes seeing, on his first journey in Canada - two fleets of Indian canoes totaling forty or fifty. They were laden with furs and after bartering back and forth with Cartier's men left, stripped naked, promising they would be back next day with more furs.

At this ^{early} time the beaver was held in no very high esteem, for its use in hat making was not yet developed, therefore the trade was in fancy fur or pelts valued because of their beauty and lustre. This kind of trade was slow and still incidental to fishing - This was the 15th half of the 16th Century -

By the end of this century a revolution had occurred and the agricultural Indians of the Huron - Iroquois family, had been driven out of the St Lawrence

valley apparently by hunting Indians - The causes of this revolution, historians tell us, are difficult to determine, but here enters Busy Little Mr Beaver -! The fashion of felt was on! and the real fur trade has begun -

These Hunting Indians used the beaver for food and clothing. In fact they wore no other clothes but a moose skin or beaver robe. The rapid development of trade with these Indians was dependent on their methods of treating the fur and on the character of the pelting process - The pelts were taken by the Indian when prime and the inner side scraped and rubbed with the marrow of certain animals. After this treatment each pelt was trimmed into rectangular shape and from five to eight sewn together with moose sinews into robes which were worn (by the Indians) with the fur next the body - The scraping of the inner side of the pelt loosened the deep roots of the long

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guard hair, and with wearing, this hair
dropped out leaving the fur - With constant
wearing for fifteen, to eighteen months the skin
(the beaver skin I mean!) became well greased
pliable and yellow in color and the fur downy.
It was this fur which was most valuable to the
hat making industry especially suited to the
fetting process -

The relationship between the French and the hunting
Indians seems to have been friendly - They fought
with them against their enemies the Southern or
agricultural tribes, one Jesuit chronicle of 1611 says
"They stay overnight with us, we rove about with them
and live among them without arms and without fear
and as has thus far appeared without danger. This
intimacy arose partly from ^{association while} trading and ^{partly} ~~partly~~ ^{partly} from trading in furs -

The savages, who had neither copper, iron, hemp
wool, vegetables nor manufactured articles of any
kind resort to the French for them, giving in return

the only thing of value they have, - namely furs
 as one Indian said in banter "In truth, my brother
 the Beaver does everything to perfection. He makes for us
 Kettles, axes, swords, knives, and gives us drink and
 food without the trouble of cultivating the ground" -

Too bad for these tribes that these metal implements
 were used without discretion and the beaver
 practically exterminated forcing the trade to push
 on to newer territories - ~~the~~ stretching the span of
 transportation necessitated the forming of an organization
 with capital to withstand the expense of maintaining
 distant trading posts and the necessary food
 and equipment - (The story of these organizations
 such as the Hudson Bay Co is a story in itself
 either romantic or economic - As a matter of fact
 it was the first trust in North America - Also the
 power and influence of these companies held
 important place in the fight for supremacy
 between the French and English - and ^{still further} their
 traders needed astute judgment and courage

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in diplomacy to handle the different warring
tribes of Indians -

I would like to read to you the names of equipment
these companies have to produce.

page 218 (Fur trade in Canada -

That was back at the end of the 18th century
but with the coming of the railroad ~~the~~
~~same~~ was abandoned for more modern
methods. ^{There came pack animals, playing an important part with camels and}
^{horses.} Still even to-day in the far northern
districts ^{and this I suppose is still called prairie} transportation remains dependent on
the rivers and is consequently distinctly
seasonal in character. Travel during the winter
months is extremely limited and expensive.
It is estimated that the cost of carrying mail
between two ports, say 150 miles (two men and
a dog team) is about \$150. Dogs are curried as
are the sleds and harness. The limit of
travel is 40 - 50 miles a day. The long

winter night and the difficult work of dog driving restrict the number of hours.

In looking at a map of Canada, it is hard to comprehend its vastness in the Hudson Bay region and Northwest Territories - yes this is indeed a frontier. Yet the machine age has had its influence aside from gasoline power and traction ^{has been applied} communications as well as transportation. Private telephones are owned by the companies - Postal Communications limited to registered mail and letters brought in once or twice during the winter, has been supplemented with the development of the radio. Receiving sets are common.

Improvement in transportation and communication materially altered the problem of supplies and provisions. In the agricultural districts to the South a tremendous increase in the production of food stuffs and improvements in methods of

Canning and conserving food had provided a base of provisions and supplies. An old fur trader of the Hudson's Bay Co described the important changes as follows -

"In my early years the annual indent or Requisition on London covered everything for the year, and that was all you received - Then came additional requisitions on Winnipeg followed by monthly, weekly, and daily requisitions - Next came telegraphing requisitions to be sent by express, perhaps two or three times a day then wireless requisitions and other communications from remote and inland Posts - At the present time airship transport service is being considered for passengers and freight to the more remote and inland Posts and districts and this all within the past forty-four years."

And we know that this has come to pass. I also believe the Government has control of all the radio sending stations in the outlying parts, at some were suspected of having German interest.

So as far as frontiers go there doesn't seem to be any anymore - at least geographical ones, there still seems to be new fields to conquer in ~~our~~ cultivated farms - ^{and business ventures} 10 degrees for a moment

Prince Edward Island may still claim their Silver foxes to be the finest - But the product of our New England and New York State farms are certainly of a ~~not~~ quality -

As with the experimenting in dyes where new ones are created over night, ^{these} is still pioneering to be done -

An example of real pioneering is brought close to home in the two Rutgers graduates Cohen and Kettleman who braved ridicule in their venture on the Farmingdale - Lakewood road

They did not see why ^{Monmouth county} couldn't raise milk - despite the criticism of their neighboring Farmers - and raise milk they have the breeding not being difficult in fact the

New York University

on this investment - 12 -
return, has been more than 100% profit. The
chief liability, being when one of the milk maids
from village and bring the neighbors chickens.
The result - the once fine belt returned by the
farmer across the band of a shot gun and
accompanied by
a big ~~box~~ killed poultry -

But to sum up the Canadian Fur Trade
History seems to show it as a retreat in the face
of settlement. It has been affected and
influenced in all important ways of the continent.
It has always been a concrete example of the
barter system -

It represents a history of contact between two
civilizations -

It led to the establishment of the great
Trading Companies.
And it gave life and sustenance to thousands
of its people -

from the fur trade...