

Joseph Smith's Journal of a Journey Inland from York Factory, 1756–57

ALEXANDER PEACOCK & SCOTT BERTHELETTE

In the winter of 1756–57, Joseph Smith and Joseph Waggoner, two servants of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), journeyed inland from York Factory to spend the season on the prairies hunting bison at the invitation of the Sturgeon Upland Cree. Following the precedent established by Anthony Henday, a laborer, net-maker, and former smuggler who undertook a similar journey in 1754–55, Smith and Waggoner's enterprise formed part of the HBC's wider efforts to boost the faltering trade at its posts along Hudson Bay. The mid-eighteenth century was a trying time for the Company. Not only had its charter come under increased scrutiny at home, but its nominal claim to a vast swathe of the North American interior appeared ever more illusory. The French, in pursuing an aggressive policy of expansion in the 1730s and 1740s, had effectively provided an alternative market for the Indigenous peoples of the Lake Winnipeg basin and Saskatchewan River valley, diverting a large quantity of furs away from the Bay and east to Montreal. Smith and Waggoner were therefore part of the HBC's attempt to reverse its fortunes by enticing Indigenous peoples up to York Factory and Churchill to trade. Smith's journal, presented in the pages that follow, is an important document in the history of the HBC, western Canada, and Indigenous North America.¹ Although some might be, and indeed have been, tempted to interpret it as a record of European "discovery," its true value lies in its attestation to the centrality of Indigenous peoples and ways of life in the workings of the fur trade. Smith and Waggoner traveled within, were guests of, and lived by the rules of an existing Indigenous world, the unsuccessful navigation of which would have resulted in the failure of their mission.

Alexander Peacock is a Ph.D. candidate at Queen's University specializing in English-language travelogues published across the Georgian period, focussing on their depictions of North American settler societies. He is interested in how accounts of travel functioned as tools of settler colonialism, as well as how writers understood the American Revolution and the continent's ever-shifting place within the British world. Scott Berthelette is Red River Métis and an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Queen's University. Berthelette's research and teaching centers on the history of New France, Indigenous peoples, the Métis, the fur trade, and Euro-Indigenous relations in North America.

¹ Joseph Smith, York Factory post journal, 1756–1757, B.239/a/43, pp. 1-33, Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA], Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.



The common charge proffered against the HBC in the mid-eighteenth century was that it had remained “asleep by the frozen sea”—a phrase first articulated by surveyor and engineer Joseph Robson—and had failed to meet the obligations conferred on it by its Royal Charter.² Indeed, the Company’s critics had easily managed to contrast the HBC’s seeming inactivity with French zeal, in the process attributing British failings in the continent’s interior to its chartered monopoly. With this backdrop, the Company’s long-favored policy of restricting its activities to the shores of Hudson Bay and James Bay, which in part reflected the inherent difficulties in maintaining inland posts, appeared increasingly less defensible.

On May 2, 1670, a Royal Charter issued by King Charles II of England incorporated the HBC and granted the new joint-stock merchandising company a presumptive monopoly over the territory whose rivers and streams flowed into Hudson Bay—an area that became known as “Rupert’s Land” (named after Prince Rupert of the Rhine, the HBC’s first governor, and the king’s cousin). From the beginning of its charter, the Company favored the strategy of waiting for Indigenous peoples to travel to the Bay with their furs. Algonquian-speaking Cree, such as the Basquia, Pegogamaw, Cowanitow, and Swampy Cree, as well as the Siouan-speaking Nakoda (Assiniboine), quickly used this system to their advantage. Benefitting from the fact that all of the major canoe routes to York Factory—via the Hayes and Nelson Rivers—ran through their territory, as well as from their procurement of firearms from the HBC (which provided a tactical advantage over their rivals the Dakota Sioux, the Gros Ventre, the Blackfoot, and the Chipewyan), the Cree and Nakoda assumed the role of middlemen in the trade between the Company and other Indigenous peoples.³ Other factors also prevented plains peoples from trading directly with the HBC. Many, for example, had by this time adopted equestrianism and were not expert in the use of the canoe, or they simply lived too great a distance from the Bay.⁴ Moreover, as Anthony Henday discovered, many peoples on the prairies, such as the Niitsítapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), had no desire to dedicate their time to trapping beaver

² E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson’s Bay Company 1670–1870. Volume I: 1670–1763* (London: The Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1958), 533.

³ Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660–1870*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 13–14; W.A. Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan before 1905* (Markham: Fifth House, 2016), 157; Victor P. Lytwyn, *Muskegonuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swampy Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 135–171.

⁴ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 59–61.

and traveling to the Bay.⁵ These conditions allowed the Cree and Nakoda to quite naturally assume the role of middlemen, upon whom the HBC came to rely heavily, tending not to interact directly with any Indigenous peoples in the interior parts of Rupert's Land themselves.

The HBC's reliance upon middlemen arose in part from necessity and reflected both the Company's longstanding ignorance of the interior and its lack of resources. The Company's first hundred years were marked by secrecy and the suppression of geographic knowledge, which it used as a method of protecting its exclusive interests in Rupert's Land. Even in the 1740s, when it finally began mapping the Bay, the Company remained unwilling to communicate its findings. The result was that Rupert's Land was little known compared to the rest of the British Empire, with the continental interior being largely a mystery even to the Company itself.⁶ Yet the HBC also lacked resources, not just knowledge. Any posts established in the interior away from the Bay presented a myriad of logistical problems. Posts needed manning and would necessarily be reliant upon Indigenous peoples for food and supplies. What was more, the HBC lacked the means to navigate the great alluvial arteries that facilitated Cree and Nakoda transportation and communication through the interior (the Company did not adopt canoes until 1749).⁷ A combination of these factors all contributed to the HBC's isolation along Hudson Bay and James Bay and its reliance on a system of Indigenous middlemen.

During the middle decades of the eighteenth century, however, it became plainly evident that some change in approach was warranted, especially considering the Company's rivalry with the French. Indeed, the French had quickly turned their attention towards the Hudson Bay hinterland following the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, the terms of which had formally ceded the Hudson Bay shoreline and the Hudson Strait to Britain.⁸ Spearheaded initially by Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, the French constructed a series of forts, which they called *les postes de la Mer de l'Ouest*, or the posts of the Western Sea, stretching west from Lake Superior to the Forks of the Saskatchewan River.⁹ These western posts had a noticeable effect on York Factory's trade, successfully siphoning off a vast quantity of furs east to the Saint-Lawrence Valley and from there onto

⁵ Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 164-166.

⁶ Ted Binnema, "Enlightened Zeal": *The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 47-74, 95-126.

⁷ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 538, 610-612.

⁸ Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 51-52.

⁹ Scott Berthelette, *Heirs of an Ambivalent Empire: French-Indigenous Relations and the Rise of the Métis in the Hudson Bay Watershed* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 101-132.

metropolitan French markets.¹⁰ Moreover, the Company's critics, notably Arthur Dobbs, a member of the Irish House of Commons, quickly seized upon La Vérendrye's zeal and success as evidence that the HBC had failed in its responsibility to explore its territories and required a more active policy.¹¹ Under these circumstances, the HBC could not, as it previously had, continue to rely solely on its system of middlemen and isolation along the Bay.¹²

James Isham, Chief Factor at York Factory, was the man responsible for formulating a potential solution to the French threat. Isham had originally favored constructing settlements in the interior to counteract the growing French influence, but in time he came to accept that it would be impossible to compete effectively in this way as long as France held on to Canada.¹³ Still wanting to diminish the influence of the French traders and siphon off some of their trade, Isham instead began a policy of sending adventurous Company men inland to encourage Indigenous peoples to come and trade at bayside posts. Isham did have a few precedents to draw upon for such an undertaking. On the English side was Henry Kelsey, who in 1690–92 had traveled to the country of the Nakoda to promote the HBC's trade. French and French-Canadian *coureurs de bois* (illicit fur traders) also had a long history of inland exploration.¹⁴ In 1754, Isham sent Anthony Henday, an HBC laborer, on a journey inland with a Cree leader named Attickasish (Little Deer). According to Isham, Henday had “gone in Land...[to] Encourage the Indians to come to Trade,” and he was especially meant to “bring the Earchethe to Trade, who are very Numerous.”¹⁵ The HBC only vaguely knew of the “Earchethe” or “Archithinues,” who called themselves

¹⁰ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 524-528; Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1939), 206; Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 157.

¹¹ This in spite of the fact that La Vérendrye was never a very successful fur trade, explorer, or Indigenous diplomat. Berthelette, *Heirs of an Ambivalent Empire*, 101-32.

¹² For more on Dobbs' challenge to the HBC's charter, see Paul W. Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713–1763* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 261-263, 268-270; Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 67-74.

¹³ Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 243-245; Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 630-631; Scott P. Stephen, *Masters and Servants: The Hudson's Bay Company and Its North American Workforce, 1668–1786* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2019), 181.

¹⁴ E.E. Rich, “Trade Habits and Economic Motivation among the Indians of North America,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 26, no. 1 (1960): 37; Barbara Belyea, “Uses of Henday's Journal,” in *A Year Inland: The Journal of a Hudson's Bay Company Winterer*, ed. Barbara Belyea (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2000), 369. For the best treatment on Henry Kelsey's career and journals, see Arthur J. Ray, *From the Frozen Sea to Buffalo Country: The Life and Times of Henry Kelsey of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1667–1724* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2022).

¹⁵ James Isham, York Factory post journal, August 16, 1754, HBCA B.239/b/11.

the “Nütsítapi,” otherwise known as the Blackfoot Confederacy, which was comprised of three confederated Indigenous nations: the Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan) and Siksika (Blackfoot).¹⁶ Because French markets were pulling away traditional Cree customers located in the Lake Winnipeg, Cedar Lake, and lower Saskatchewan River regions, Isham and other HBC officials wanted to open new untapped markets. Heday was also tasked with keeping a journal detailing his movements and the environments traversed in a scientific manner.¹⁷

Although he failed to convince the Nütsítapi to return with him to the Bay, Heday’s travels were judged a sufficient success and inaugurated a new policy of inland wintering, which was cheap and allowed the HBC to stick to its tried-and-true policy of restricting its main activities to bayside factories. Indeed, although winterers only ever represented a small number of the HBC’s workforce—just fourteen company servants went on inland expeditions between 1754 and 1770—a total of fifty-six trips were made between 1754 and 1775, becoming a cornerstone of company policy.¹⁸ One of these important journeys was that made by Smith and Waggoner in 1756–57.



Following the success of Heday’s expedition, Isham sent more young men inland to coax various Indigenous bands to come to trade at Hudson Bay. Isham’s instructions to Smith and Waggoner did not vastly differ from those given to Heday two years prior. They were to travel inland and distribute presents and goods among Indigenous peoples, encouraging them at the same time to make the journey up to the Bay to trade with the Company. They were to keep an eye out for the French but were not to provoke a confrontation with them. They were to accompany Washiabitt, a leader among the Sturgeon Cree, and his people back to their homeland in the Swan River region of present-day Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Washiabitt’s invitation to the HBC was a stroke of good luck, as French activity in the interior had severely impacted the Company’s trade with

¹⁶ For more on the Blackfoot in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (the era when HBC, North West Company, and American traders were fully engaged in the buffalo trade on the Northern Great Plains), see Ted Binnema, “Allegiances and Interests: Nütsítapi (Blackfoot) Trade, Diplomacy, and Warfare, 1806–1831,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 327–419; Ted Binnema and William A. Dobak, “Like the Greedy Wolf: The Blackfeet, the St. Louis Fur Trade, and War Fever, 1807–1831,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 411–430; Ryan Hall, *Beneath the Backbone of the World: Blackfoot People and the North American Borderlands, 1720–1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

¹⁷ Barbara Belyea, “Indians, Asinipoets and Archithinues,” in *A Year Inland*, 343–345; Belyea, “Uses of Heday’s Journal,” 370; Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 243–250.

¹⁸ Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 170; Stephen, *Masters and Servants*, 182.

the Sturgeon Cree in particular.¹⁹ Smith and Waggoner were, following on from Henry Kelsey in 1690–92, consequently some of the first HBC servants to ever journey as far as the Assiniboine River region.²⁰

Joseph Smith, a laborer who had arrived from England in 1753, was the first of Isham's selection to travel with the Sturgeon Cree. Quickly proving his worth, the winter of 1756–57 turned out to be just the first of a total of five journeys that Smith made inland during his career. It was also Smith whom Isham entrusted with keeping a journal and a detailed account of their activities. Smith eventually died in 1765 en route to York Factory, leaving behind one child whose mother was an Indigenous woman. Because he authored the journal, Smith has generally received far more attention than his partner, Joseph Waggoner, who even lacks an entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Yet in many respects, Waggoner had a more complex identity and background, which might have been a factor in the success of his and Smith's mission, even if he remains a largely shadowy figure in its undertaking.

Joseph Waggoner was the son of Rowland Waggoner, an illiterate laborer who had arrived in Rupert's Land in 1714.²¹ The elder Waggoner had quickly proven himself indispensable to the Company—indeed a jack of all trades—and spent a long career at Fort Albany, rising to become chief of that post in 1739. He died in 1740, probably in no small measure due to the fact that he consumed an average of over thirteen gallons of brandy per year.²² It remains uncertain as to whom Joseph's mother was or when precisely he was born, but some historians have suggested she was an Indigenous woman.²³ Although historian Jennifer S. H. Brown has identified Charles Price Isham (b. 1754) as the first child born to an Indigenous mother and European father who beyond a doubt went on to achieve a noteworthy career in the fur trade,²⁴ this in no way precludes the younger Waggoner from also being of Indigenous blood, even if this claim is harder to substantiate. Evidence for Waggoner's parentage does, however, exist in his father's will, which instructed his executor, James Duffield to take his son back to England. This would suggest that Joseph was born at the Bay where the

¹⁹ George E. Thorman, "Smith, Joseph," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 3 (1974); Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 172; Belyea, "Uses of Heday's Journal," 381; Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 642.

²⁰ Meyer and Russell have attempted to trace Kelsey's route, based upon one of the three surviving copies of his poem and journal, and argue that they travelled along the Etomami River-Lilian River trail to the aspen parklands. Kelsey's party was therefore likely to have been near the mouth of the Lilian River, a tributary of the Assiniboine River. David Meyer and Dale Russell, "'Through the Woods Where There Were Now Track Ways': Kelsey, Heday, and Trails in East Central Saskatchewan," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 31, no. 3 (2007): 182-186.

²¹ Thorman, "Smith, Joseph."

²² George E. Thorman, "Waggoner, Rowland," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2 (1982).

²³ Thorman, "Smith, Joseph."

²⁴ Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 155-156.

only women would have been Indigenous.²⁵ Irrespective of his matrilineal parentage, Joseph followed in his father's footsteps and likewise spent his adult life in the service of the HBC, making a total of three inland journeys. He continued to be responsible for bringing Indigenous peoples up to York Factory to trade into the 1760s, before he met the melancholy fate of drowning in 1766.²⁶

If Waggoner did have an Indigenous mother, then this could have proven highly beneficial for the two Josephs' task of wintering on the prairies, as such an undertaking relied upon adopting an Indigenous way of life for its success. This argument, however, must be prefaced with the disclaimer that we cannot be entirely sure how much of an affiliation he may have enjoyed with his mother's culture. HBC historian E.E. Rich argues that the Company understood the importance of forming close-knit alliances with Indigenous peoples, which was why it increasingly employed mixed-heritage servants such as Waggoner in the eighteenth century.²⁷ Indeed, part of the logic behind inland wintering was that these men were to live not merely *with* but *like* Indigenous people, marking them as quite distinct from the likes of La Vérendrye, who traveled the interior with other Frenchmen and French-Canadians from the Saint-Lawrence Valley.²⁸ While La Vérendrye and other French colonial officers mostly stayed at their posts, they would also send subordinate *voyageurs* and *engagés* to live and trade *en dérrouine* among Indigenous bands. "En dérrouine" is a fur trade idiom that roughly translates as traveling with a small complement of goods to Indigenous communities to trade for furs.²⁹

The fact that such traders traveled with Indigenous bands highlights that the journeys remained primarily Indigenous undertakings and followed Indigenous seasonal subsistence and land use patterns. As noted by historian Bill Waiser, Anthony Henday's trip was an enterprise wholly arranged by the Pegogamaw Cree, with the Englishman merely accompanying them as their guest.³⁰ The routes taken by all the inland travelers reflected Indigenous needs and patterns, and even Smith and Waggoner's journey formed part of the traditional seasonal activities of the Sturgeon Cree, which included trapping wolves, hunting and processing bison, smoking and feasting, and building canoes for their return journey

²⁵ Stephen, *Masters and Servants*, 257, 359n.84

²⁶ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 645; Stephen, *Masters and Servants*, 186.

²⁷ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 645.

²⁸ Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 244-250.

²⁹ For fur trade lexicon and meaning of "en dérrouine," see Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 201-203.

³⁰ Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 168.

to the Bay.³¹ HBC employees were entering an Indigenous world and participating in it on its own terms. Although we can only speculate as to the extent to which Waggoner might have been familiar with his mother's culture, servants who could move more seamlessly between European and Indigenous worlds were becoming all the more consequential to Company operations in the interior by the time of his and Smith's voyage.



Smith's journal offers an important record of both the two Josephs' journey and the HBC's policy of inland wintering more generally. Few of the early HBC servants who traveled inland possessed the necessary literary skills to produce written accounts of their exploits.³² Naturally, later inland sojourners, like William Tomison, William Pink, Matthew Cocking, Philip Turnor, and of course Samuel Hearne in the later decades of the eighteenth century produced, unlike Smith, very detailed accounts of their travels inland. Yet what makes Smith's journal remarkable is that it is one of the earliest records of an HBC inlander following the initial Henday expedition. Kelsey left behind a record of his journey in the form of a rhymed verse describing the summer of 1690, as well as a brief travel journal in prose describing the period from June to September 1691, meaning that Smith's journal provides scholars with a far more detailed description of his travels.³³ While Smith's journal is therefore a valuable document, there remain serious issues that one must consider when reading the account concerning its authorship, its claims to an empirical authority, as well as our ability to ascertain precisely where the two Josephs traveled that winter.

Although James Isham tasked Smith with keeping a journal, we might rather consider the final piece as being collaboratively written. For one, the surviving copy of Smith's 1756-57 journal is written in the hand of Andrew Graham, an assistant writer who worked under Isham at York Factory in the 1750s. Literary scholar Barbara Belyea has explored the issue of Graham's editorship in detail in regard to Henday's journals. She has argued that Graham applied a heavy editorial influence on the winterers' writings more generally, not only regularizing spelling but also adding remarks that would render the documents more in line with the Company's instructions and expectations. Henday's journal survives in the form of four copies that all differ from one another, and it is only by

³¹ Dale R. Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree and their Neighbours* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, Archaeological Survey of Canada, Mercury Series Paper 143, 1991), 110; Barbara Belyea, "Tracing Henday's Route," in *A Year Inland*, 331.

³² Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree and their Neighbours*, 91; Stephen, *Masters and Servants*, 182.

³³ Meyer and Russell, "Through the Woods Where 'Thare Ware Now Track Ways," 182.

comparing them that we can deduce the extent of Graham's editorial hand in winterers' journals.³⁴ In Smith's case, it is much harder to begin to ascertain the extent of Graham's influence, as no copy remains in Smith's hand. Perhaps this editorial influence would present a significant problem if we were to value Smith's journal as an objective record of Smith's experiences alone, but if we adopt Germaine Warkentin's suggestion that exploration texts are "corporate production[s]," where few authors had a sense of proprietorship, then the questions of authorship are less problematic.³⁵ We might thus approach Smith's journal as a collaborative account of the HBC's early attempts to explore the interior and of the Company's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

The possibility of Graham's modifications to the original journal nevertheless raises questions regarding the extent to which we can accept its empirical authority. Smith's journal broadly fits into the genre of eighteenth-century travel and exploration texts, meaning that it lays claim to the principles of Lockean empiricism. Central to this concept was the autonomy and veracity of the eyewitness narrator, evidence of which served as nominal proof of the truth of a writer's account and contributed towards a reader's ability to accept it as fact.³⁶ Throughout the eighteenth century, furthermore, there was a growing connection between geography and exploration on the one part and empirical science on the other. This genre may have received its greatest expression with the writings associated with James Cook's expeditions to the Pacific Northwest, but the principle of scientific objectivity—the notion that a piece of exploration writing represented disinterested and first-hand observations—is present within Smith's earlier journal.³⁷ We can see this quite clearly in the matter-of-fact style of reporting the events of the day, with a typical entry running something like as follows:

In the morning sett forward, Course SE^t, past on Bay, and on Island, the River, winding So much went in to a Lake not very Large, full of Islands, the Shore Low, with willows and poplar, our Course SW^t. till we Came to a River, steered SSW^t, passing by Islands, till night, then put up.³⁸

³⁴ Belyea, "Uses of Henday's Journal," 382-385; Glyndwr Williams, "Graham, Andrew," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (1983).

³⁵ Germaine Warkentin, "Introduction to the First Edition," in *Canadian Exploration Texts*, 2nd ed., ed. Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), 31.

³⁶ Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 80.

³⁷ Daniel Wright Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 17-27; Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 75-82; Warkentin, "Introduction to the First Edition," 29.

³⁸ September 21, 1756.

The entry endeavors to be as objective as possible, expressing little in the way of opinions, instead focussing on geographical facts, noting compass directions and the sights encountered during the course of the day; it is seemingly verifiable and possesses no hint of Graham's editorial hand. It implies it can be trusted because it is apparently first-hand and factual, even a little monotonous.

Smith's journal may indeed have attempted to lay a claim to this empirical standard, yet (as was also the case in Henday's writings) it could not so easily disguise its shortcomings; the journal lacks specificity throughout.³⁹ It is very rare, for instance, that Smith gives any name to a place or group of people encountered. He frequently notes the expedition's course through statements such as "past severall Islands," but what islands these were and precisely where he might have found them usually remains largely a mystery. In some instances, however, it has been possible to reconstruct portions of Smith and Waggoner's journey. The lack of spontaneity and monotonous quality of many of the entries suggest that the instructions given in many respects dictated what was recorded and "seen."⁴⁰ Smith's journal made a genuine attempt to be an empirical and scientific record of what he saw, which, considering his meager education and prior knowledge of the interior, was no small task.

When we consider the vagueness of Smith's journal entries, it is perhaps a little surprising that many historians possess such a degree of confidence as to relate the precise route taken by the two Josephs in copious detail. It is true that some, like E.E. Rich and Dale R. Russell, offer a disclaimer that it is almost impossible that we should know exactly where they traveled, yet each still provides an incredibly detailed route.⁴¹ Historical geographer Richard I. Ruggles believed that Smith's journal was sufficient for Isham to produce an accurate map of the journey after their return to York Factory.⁴² Some of these claims, more specifically the older ones, are steeped in the language of colonialism and nationalism, where "explorers" and "pioneers," which the two Josephs are transformed into, become the first white men to visit such regions, marginalizing in the process the central place of Indigenous peoples in these expeditions.⁴³ Minor disagreements and political motivations aside, the general consensus among historians is that Smith and Waggoner traveled inland from York Factory, traversing the north end of Lake Winnipeg towards Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba, then west

³⁹ On Henday see, Barbara Belyea, "From Manuscript to Print," in *A Year Inland*, 16.

⁴⁰ Belyea, "Uses of Henday's Journal," 371.

⁴¹ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 642-643; Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree and their Neighbours*, 110.

⁴² Richard I. Ruggles, *A Country So Interesting: The Hudson's Bay Company and Two Centuries of Mapping, 1670-1870* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 38.

⁴³ Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 251.

through the Duck and Riding Mountains and through the Swan River Valley, finally crossing the Assiniboine River and wintering in present-day southwestern Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan.⁴⁴ The reader may judge for themselves the veracity of wider claims regarding the route. We can certainly make an educated guess as to where they travelled, but we shall likely never be able to precisely ascertain the course of their route.

While Smith and Waggoner's itinerary remains elusive, the journal they produced remains of great value to researchers, offering insights that are far more valuable than knowing their precise route. The journal provides evidence of the centrality of Indigenous peoples to the fur trade, as well as rare documentary evidence of the yearly activities of the Cree in the mid-eighteenth century and the ongoing versatility of Indigenous cultures in the heart of North America. It further offers an account of the HBC's inland operations in the 1750s and its rivalry with French traders. Smith and Waggoner's journey also served as one of the first steps in a new Company policy that would slowly pivot HBC operations towards the interior. By the late-1770s, the HBC workforce had moved inland, reorienting the site of Euro-Indigenous relations away from coastal factories and towards Saskatchewan Valley posts like Cumberland House, Nipawin, Upper Hudson House, and Manchester House. Not since the days of Henry Kelsey in the 1690s had the HBC so earnestly pursued the exploration of the interior of North America.⁴⁵ If the HBC had "for eighty years slept at the edge of a frozen sea," as Joseph Robson had once criticized, they had indeed now awoken.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, 250-251; Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 642-643; Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree and their Neighbours*, 110-112; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 40-41.

⁴⁵ For more on the HBC exploration of the interior, particularly the Saskatchewan River route, see Waiser, *A World We Have Lost*, 157-174.

⁴⁶ Joseph Robson, *An account of six years residence in Hudson's-bay* (London: Printed for J. Payne and J. Bouquet, 1752), 6. Further bibliographic details for this work can be found in the English Short Title Catalogue (<https://estc.bl.uk>), where it is known as ESTC T100417.

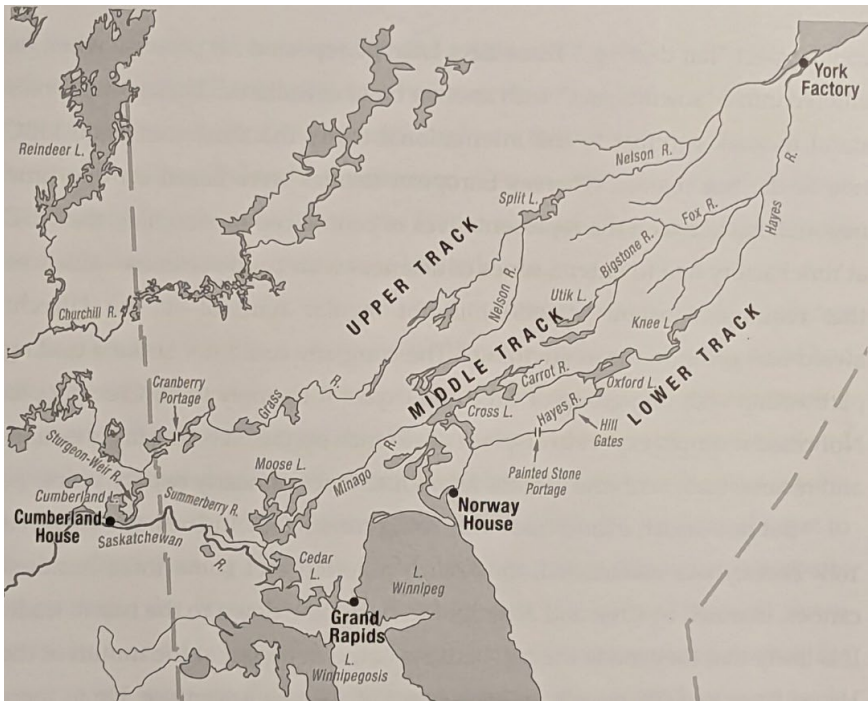


Figure I. Major canoe routes between York Factory and the interior. An attempted reconstruction of Smith and Waggoner's route suggests that they took the "Lower Track" through Kneehill, Oxford Lake, and the Painted Stone Portage. Bill Waiser, *A World We Have Lost: Saskatchewan Before 1905* (Markham, Ontario: Fifth House Publishing, 2016). Courtesy of Fifth House Publishing.

THE JOURNAL OF JOSEPH SMITH

A Journal of the most remarkable Observations and Occurrances on a Journey in Land performed by Joseph Smith & Joseph Waggoner Who Departed from York Fort August the 23^d: 1756 and Returned June the 25th: 1757
by Joseph Smith [n.p., cover]¹

The Following Journal is Remarks and Observations of a Journey in Land, performed by Joseph Smith & Joseph Waggoner Who Departed from York Fort Augst, the 23^d, 1756 And Returned June Y^e. 25th, 1757. [end fol. 2^v]

1756 Augst y^e 23^d

We took our Departure from York: :fort, and in 4 days Reached Steal river,² seed two tents of Ind^s. Stayed there two days, the wind blowing hard att NWst.³

30 [August 1756]

Sett forward up the river past three points Coarse⁴ WNWst. then SWbW. the SW^t.

¹ The verso of the cover bears catalog data penciled by an HCA archivist: “B.239/a/43. 1756/57.” For full catalog information, see the introduction, fn. 1. The manuscript is blank from fols. 1-2^r. The leaves are paginated in Andrew Graham’s hand and were foliated by an archivist. This transcription is diplomatic, with all exceptions noted in brackets or the notes.

² According to Anthony Henday’s account, the Cree called this river “Apet Sepee” or “Fire-steel River.” Henday, *A Year Inland*, 44.

³ Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various sections of the Hayes were identified as individual rivers—Steel, Hill, Little Jack—with only the river southward from York Factory for a distance of 56 miles to “The Forks” of Shamattawa (Gods) River and Steel River counting as the Hayes River. In 1902, the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names assigned the name “Hayes River” to the entire length of the waterway from York Factory to Painted Stone Portage, a distance of about 300 miles. William Barr and Larry Green, “Lt. Aemilius Simpson’s Survey from York Factory to Fort Vancouver, 1826,” *Journal of the Hakluyt Society* (August 2014): 12. Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/Then and Now* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen’s Printer, 1969), 37; J. B. Tyrrell, *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor between the years 1774 and 1792* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), 99.

⁴ Course. Graham varies between these two spellings throughout.

bank high and Small woods, past one Small Creek, and Island, put up for this night.⁵

31st. [August 1756]

In the morning Sett out, Steering SW^t., past one small Island, with Willows one it; then Coarse SbW^t, past one Shoal point, the River winding very much, then Came to Sockitton River the mouth of it NW^t., | the banks on the SW^t. Side very high, and on the NE^t. side Low only as We Entered the Rivers Mouth;⁶ high with Willows and poplars, | past one Bluff, and one point, Coarse SbE^t, Seed two Little willow Islands then Coarse SWbW^t, [end p. 1]⁷ untill we past one Shoal point, Coarse WSWst. past two Little Islands, one of them had birch Growing on it past a Shoal point, Coarse SW^t, untill we put up att night.

Sept^r y^e 1st. [1756]

In the morning unpitched and steered SbW, past severall Islands some with willows, Some with Grass only, past one Bay, and one Bluff, then Coarse South, the Wood is Small put up Att night

⁵ Henday's account names the creek "Mistick-Apethaw Sepee" or "Wood Partridge River." Henday, *A Year Inland*, 44.

⁶ Smith seems to be describing what's named "Hill River" depicted on a map titled "Route of the Expedition from York Factory to Cumberland House: and the Summer & Winter Tracks from thence to Isle a la Crosse, in 1819 & 1820" that accompanied John Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22*. Stanford University's David Rumsey Map Center has recently published a high-resolution reproduction of its copy of the map (G3470 1823 .M8) here: <https://purl.stanford.edu/sr231gh4200>. According to Franklin's map, the southwestern shore of Hill River was a large hill or escarpment about 600 feet high, whereas the eastern bank was more level with the river. Franklin described the scenery of Hill River passage: "The highest of these hills, which gives a name to the river, has an elevation not exceeding six hundred feet. From its summit, thirty-six lakes are said to be visible." John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22* (London: John Murray, 1823), 33.

⁷ The date of this entry—"August y^e 31st"—is repeated in p. 2's margin. Smith uses this convention for all multipage entries throughout the manuscript. These repeated dates are omitted from this transcript.

2^d. [September 1756]

In the morning sett out, Coarse South Crossing many Small falls, then Coarse SSW. Cross'd a Large fall was forced to Carry our things over it, all day the falls Continued very thick the banks washey and poor Woods, past two Islands with pine trees growing on them then Coarse SWbW, put up for the night upon An Island with pine trees.

3^d. [September 1756]

In the morning sett out Coarse SbW^t. Crossing falls And passing by Islands Little birch to be Seen Yet, att night **[end p. 2]** put up the Islands so thick I Could not Examine them

4th. [September 1756]

In the morning moved, and Steered SSW^t, all the forenoon nothing but Islands, And falls, for we Could not discover Any Main Land, the River Runneth so very wide, in the afternoon Coarse SbW^t, till we put up Att night, nothing to be Seen Yet but falls, and Islands:

5th. [September 1756]

In the morning Sett out, and Steered SSW^t, but Soon after Altered our Course, to SW, Still Crossing Falls, and passing by Islands, in the Evening Steered away SSW^t, untill we Came to the Lake, our Course SW^t, it is very wide, and full of Islands, the SE^t. shore flatt and Small Woods, the NW^t. side some small pine trees, Att night we put up on the SE^t. Shore

6th. [September 1756]

This day Lay by, wind NW^t. with a strong gale. **[end p. 3]**

1756 Sept ye 7th.

This day Sett out Course SWst, untill We past four Willow, & birch Islands; then Steer'd SbW^t. Came to A River full of Islands, and falls, some bore Birch some willows, others pine trees, in the Evening past one Large fall, and two Islands; Steering SWbS. Entered up Another River which was a nearer way, the Shores were flatt and on the SE^t. side some pine, and poplar trees, one the NW^t. side were Willows and poplars, then we Steered SW^t. untill we Came to the mouth of the Great Lake,⁸ there we Lay for that night, the Shores Low and but poor wood on them.

8th. [September 1756]

In the morning we steered away South, mett with Ind^s. att the head of a Large Island, there we Laid Att night;

9th. [September 1756]

In the morning Steered away SSW^t, past Six Islands, then Steered SW^t, past Six Bluffs and three Bays on the NW^t. Shore; att night we put up in a good Bay for Jack,⁹ the water was so **[end p. 4]** Ruff could not sett the nett, in the night Blowed very hard att NW.^t

10th. [September 1756]

This day blowed hard Could not move, See two Islands bearing SE^t. here we Caught the Largest Jack ever I seed, the Ind^s. Calls it Jack Bay.

⁸ Oxford Lake, according to anthropologist Dale R. Russell, which the party would have had to cross since they travelled inland by way of the Hayes River. Twelve days later, on September 22, they reached "Wineapeck Sockahagan" or Lake Winnipeg. In other travel accounts and maps, Oxford Lake is referred to as Bottomless or Holey (i.e., hole) Lake from the Cree "Pe-the-pa-we-ne-pee." Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree*, 157.

⁹ Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*).

11th. [September 1756]

This morning sett out Course South untill We past two Islands, then our Course SSW^t, then past four Islands, our Course SbW^t, see a great many Islands, to the Eastward of us, att noon Came to the River that Runneth betwixt the Lakes, Course WSW, untill we pass On, great fall then Steered West, Cross'd 3 falls And then put up.

12th. [September 1756]

In the morning moved and Steered West, the rivers betwixt the Lake winded very much, for after Crossing two falls we went WNW^t, then Cross'd four falls Steered away NW; past one Island with good Wood on it, then we Came to a River which Runneth to the Westward, Steered West till we Came to the Lake, which Runneth to the Southward, **[end p. 5]** in the Entrance of this Lake, the water is So deep no bottom to be found, the shores is Low, And on the West Side, but poor Wood; but on the East Side there is pretty good Wood, Birch, and pine; our Course SbW^t. past four Islands bearing to the Westward of us, Seed Severall¹⁰ more, Came to a River, that Runneth between the Lakes, and there we put up, for that night.

13th [September 1756]

In the morning sett out Course SW^t. but did not go that Course Long, for there were a River that Runneth to the Eastward, went up that River Course East till we past one fall, then went SW, Came to a place where were two Rivers, one Run to the Southward, and one to the Westward; but we went up the one that run to the Southward; steering away South, untill we Came to a fall, and four Islands; then steered SE^t. the SW^t. Land Rockey, and poor Wood, on the NE^t. side very fine pine tree, the River winded to the Westward, steered SbW; Untill We Came

¹⁰ Here Graham uses a colon as a line break, the exact text reads "Se::verall."

Unto [end p. 6] the Lake, our Course then South untill we past five Islands, then Course SbW^t, untill night; we put up att the head of an Island;

14th. [September 1756]

In the morning Sett forward Steering away SSW^t. and SW^t, passing by Severall Islands the Shores Still Low and Small wood, in the middle of the Day Came to a Little River the Shores very high, and Rocky Course WSW^t. passing severall falls and Islands, Came to the Lake, put up for that night.

15th. [September 1756]

In the morning sett out Coarse SSW^t, Came to a Large fall, obliged to Carry our things above a mile, on our backs; from this fall we went SE^t, passing by Islands, keeping that Coarse untill noon, then Went South, past one Island then Coarse SW^t, Came to a River, went two mile up, Came to two tents of Ind^s, they behaved very Civily to us, put up for that night, the shore Low but pretty good woods.[end p. 7]

1756 Sep^r y^e 16.

In the morning moved, our Course SWbS, past one Island, then Came to a River; we being obliged to Cross the Land, for above a mile; Carried our things in to the Above River, the Current going with us, our Course SSW, this River was narrow, and more Like to A Creek but the Shores flatt, and but poor wood, Came to A Beaver Dam, was forced to pull it down before we Could Get water to Go with, after two hours Work Gott past it, steered away SW^t, then Came to A very Shoal place, obliged to Lead our Canoes along for above A mile, the River Run to the Northward, Steered NW, past one Bay, put up for this night;

17th. [or 18th September 1756]¹¹

In the morning Steered Away WNW^t, Came to the falls no Water to go with the Canoes, obliged to Carry our things over them and After that to go into the woods to pull down a beaver Dam as We had the day before, from this **[end p. 8]** place our Course NW, and nothing growing ashore but willows, Cross'd A narrow Creek then Steered West, untill we past one Bay, then WSW^t, Cross'd another Creek, put up for this night Low Shore And Burnt woods,

19th [September 1756]

In the morning Sett forward Course SW^t, And WSW^t. past a Little Creek here. The Shore is high And Rockey, nothing to be seen but burnt woods, passing by Islands, till we Came to two Rivers, the one Run to the southward, And the other to the northward; went up the on that run to the Southward, steering away South, past 3 falls, then Course SbW^t, the Shores with good Wood; past Six Islands, Went SSW^t, into the next Lake; passing by Islands Steering Sometimes SW^t, then SWbW^t, untill We Came to a River that run to the Eastward, steered away East, putt up for this night, **[end p. 9]**

1756 Sept^r y^e 20th.

This Day Lay by Snowed hard.

21st [September 1756]

In the morning sett forward, Course SE^t, past on Bay, and on Island, the River, winding So much went into a Lake not very Large,¹² full of Islands, the Shore

¹¹ This entry describes the events of a singular day but spans two pages with contradictory margin dates (the 17th and 18th). Its reference to the pulling down of the first beaver dam “the day before” suggests the day described was the 17th, and that the events of the 18th are omitted or mistakenly labeled the 19th.

¹² This lake is possibly Little Playgreen Lake since they entered Lake Winnipeg the following day.

Low, with willows and poplar, our Course SW^t. till we Came to a River, steered SSW^t, passing by Islands, till night, then put up.

22^d [September 1756]

In the morning proceeded on our Voyage, steering SW^t, till We Entered Another small Lake, then Coarse South for About 4 hours, then SSE^t, passing by a great many Islands, About two O Clock we Entered Wineapeck Sockahagan,¹³ Steering¹⁴ away SSE^t, till night we put up; the shores flatt and very good Woods on Each Side. [end p. 10]

1756 Sep^r ye 23^d

In the morning proceeded our Course | from point to point of the Lake | South Lost Sight of the Eastern Shore, the Wind blowing hard, obliged us to put up.

¹³ Lake Winnipeg. “Sockahagan” is the first Indigenous word to appear in Smith’s journal. Linguists and anthropologists have recognized the linguistic subdivisions in the Western Cree based primarily on the spoken dialects of /y/, /n/, and /th/, as well as geographic boundaries. Rocky Cree of the Churchill River drainage basin speak the /th/ dialect and refer to themselves as “Asiniskaw Īthinīwak,” which translates to “people of the place where there is an abundance of rock.” Western Woods Cree, like the Sturgeon Cree who guided Smith and Waggoner, spoke the /n/ dialect Cree language (Ininimowin) and refer to themselves as “Ininēwak.” The Swampy or Lowland Cree also speak the /n/ dialect and refer to themselves as “Omushkegowuk,” which means “people of the muskeg.” Lastly, the Plains Cree speak the /y/ dialect and refer to themselves as “Nēhiyawak,” which translates to “those who speak the same language.” Henry Kelsey’s dictionary seems to reflect the /n/ dialect that Smith and Waggoner’s Sturgeon Cree guides would have spoken. Kelsey’s dictionary lists “Saw cau higger” as the Cree word for “Lake,” which is certainly a close approximation of “Sockahagan.” For Cree languages, see Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 177; Victor P. Lytwyn, *Muskegonuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swampy Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), xi, 206, Louis Bird, *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown, Paul W. DePasquale, and Mark F. Rumi (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 24; James G.E. Smith, “The Western Woods Cree: Anthropological Myth and Historical Reality,” *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 3 (1987): 434-448; Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree*, 3-4. For Kelsey’s dictionary, see Arthur J. Ray, *From the Frozen Sea to Buffalo Country: The Life and Times of Henry Kelsey of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1667–1724* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2022), 221.

¹⁴ “Steer:ing”

24. Oct^r 6th

Could not proceed on our voyage not gaining above two miles.¹⁵

7th. [October 1756]

In the morning Sett forward doubling points Coarse SSW^t, then WNW^t, till we past a very Long point and One Island, then put up for the night.

8th [October 1756]

In the morning Sett forward Course SE^t, past an Island, then Went South untill we Came to A River And there put up.¹⁶ [end p. 11]

1756 Oct^r y^e 9th

In the morning sett forward up the River Course South,¹⁷ Att noon Came where our Leaders family Lay, only one tent, and two men, the Ind^s. All gone So Late in the Year, |

10 to y^e 18 [October 1756]

We Lay by designing to Leave Our Canoes the Rivers So Shoal, The French Comes past att this place Usually, but had not, so Late in the Season.

¹⁵ Arthur S. Morton notes that Smith and Waggoner “were windbound for a fortnight” on the north shore of Lake Winnipeg. Morton, *History of the Canadian West*, 250.

¹⁶ According to Morton, this river is the Saskatchewan River which the party took to exit Lake Winnipeg and travel towards Cedar Lake. Morton, *History of the Canadian West*, 250.

¹⁷ Curiously Smith does not mention the Grand Rapids (which the party would have had to portage) where the Saskatchewan River enters Lake Winnipeg at a significant drop. This is notably the only significant obstacle on the Saskatchewan-North Saskatchewan route between the Rocky Mountains and Lake Winnipeg. John Franklin’s narrative describes the obstacle in this way: “At the grand rapid, the Saskatchewan forms a sudden bend, from south to east, and works its way through a narrow channel, deeply worn into the limestone strata. The stream, rushing with impetuous force over a rocky and uneven bottom, presents a sheet of foam, and seems to bear with impatience the straitened confinement of its lofty banks.” Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, 45.

19th. [October 1756]

In the morning sett out and travelled till night Course South and SbE.

20th. [October 1756]

In the morning sett forward till night, Course from the SSE to the South. [**end p. 12]**

1756 Oct^r y^e 21st

In the morning sett forward Course SbE^t. about four Mile then we Came to A Lake, from that to another where there were Ind^s,¹⁸ we were treated with the Greatest Kindness, Gave them tobacco, And other things that we had to give, there were plenty of mouse¹⁹ Stay'd to the 28 Instant;

28th. [October 1756]

In the morning We moved altogether our Course South along the Lake Side untill noon then Changed our Course SSE^t, untill we put up Att night.

29th. [October 1756]

This day Snowed very Much Lay by.

30th. [October 1756]

In the morning moved still in Company with the Ind^s. we mett on the 21st. Instant, the Snow Almost foot depth, Left the Lake and walked Across [**end p. 13]** an Island our Course South untill noon, then SSW^t, att night put up.

¹⁸ The lake where Smith and Waggoner met the Indigenous group was probably Cedar Lake where they would spend the rest of the month.

¹⁹ Moose (*Alces alces*) not to be confused with mouse (*peromyscus sonoriensis*). See also November 11, 1756; February 19, 1757; and February 24, 1757, below.

31st. [October 1756]

In the morning we moved our Course South, Across the Island, and in the Evening Came to the River; where I was Informed there were a french house, but they had Left it; so we Stay'd there 8 days,²⁰

Nov^r ye 9th.

Moved and Cross'd another Island, our Course South, att night put up.

10th. [November 1756]

Moving forward Course SbW^t. untill noon, then SW^t, at night put up.

11th. November 1756

This day moved forward Course SSW^t, on this Island there were the Largest wood I had ever Seen in the Country, Ash and Birch trees, We Came to a Lake very Large on three days Journey from the french house, SW^t. Course **[end p. 14]** see'd plenty of Islands, and a Great many Mouse on them, in the Evening Came to the hills, very Lofty, with plenty of Mouse; there we put up for the night.

12th. [November 1756]

In the Morning we proceeded forward on our Journey Course SW^t, Retained one man and his wife that went from us four Days ago, brought with them one french Man And five Indians he was very Civill to us, he had no powder Att his factory, he had been froze in Att a Great Lake he farther told us there were One man more, and was desirous we would Go to his house, in this place we Catcht the Largest Jack ever I seed Yet.

²⁰ Arthur S. Morton believes that the “french house” where the party rested for eight days was Fort Bourbon on Cedar Lake. Smith and Waggoner would visit Fort Bourbon and be entertained by the French “Master” during their return journey in May 1757. Morton, *History of the Canadian West*, 250.

13th [November 1756]

This day we moved to a place in the Lake and stay'd five days, till they went and brought two french with them, to stay behaved Extreably well, to us. **[end p. 15]**

1756 Nov^r y^e 14th.

This Day We all moved Course SW^t, att night we Came to Ind^s, and two french men with them.

15th. [November 1756]

This day we all Lay by the frenchmen Inform'd us there were three more of them Coming to Stay with us all Winter;

16th. [November 1756]

This morning we proceeded forward Course South, one of the french men Went back with some provisions for his Companions they had Left behind.

17th. [November 1756]

This day Lay by and they Came up to us Att night, and Ind^s, with them one of which was a Captⁿ. of Yours belonging to York Fort, he told me he had not been down these 3 or 4 Years, We Gave them what things We had.²¹ **[end p. 16]**

1756 Nov^r y^e 18th.

This day we moved directing our Course SSW^t, untill we put up.

²¹ The designation "trading captain" refers to leaders who headed trading convoys to HBC posts, and who were generally recognized and supported by HBC personnel with special gifts, such as suits, medals, and gorgets, for their influential role. Trade captains were able to mobilize hunters, organize long journeys, and negotiate with European traders. Toby Elaine Morantz, "James Bay Trading Captains of the Eighteenth Century: New Perspectives on Algonquian Social Organization," *Papers of the Algonquian Conference* 8 (1977): 77-89.

19th. November 1756

This day We Steered our Course SW^t, in the Evening we Came to A River with very high hills, and burnt woods; plenty of provisions to be had.

20 to 28th [November 1756]

We moved backward and forward We Could not go farr in a day there being An Indⁿ. Sick forc'd to haul him upon Sleds, nothing to be Seen but burnt woods.

29th. [November 1756]

This day We moved Course South Came to Another hill and Burnt woods, then our Course SSW^t. till night we put up. **[end p. 17]**

1756 30th of Nov^r.

This day moved forward Course SbW^t, untill we past on hill, and over a River,²² then we went South;

Dec^r y^e 1 to y^e 5th.

Lay by Killing Buffeloo²³ which were plenty, we and four Ind^s, went to Look for Ind^s, I found one of Your Capt^{ns}, he was very Civill to me, Joseph Waggoner Could not find any they had all moved farther off;

6th. [December 1756]

This Morning sett forward Course South, Came up with them there were Smoaking and feasting for 3 days, And We Gave them tobacco.

²² The river they crossed must have been the Assiniboine. Morton, *History of the Canadian West*, 251.

²³ American Buffalo (*Bison Bison*).

10th. [December 1756]

This day moved forward Course SW^t, four men went to Look for Ind^s, Att night put up. [end p. 18]

1756 Dec^r 11 to y^e 12.

Lay by waiting for the four men that went away on the tenth Instant.

13th. [December 1756]

This day Sett forward Course SW^t, untill we past one River, nothing but burnt woods, att night Came one of the men and brought word, that the Ind^s. were moved, and they Could not find them.

14th. [December 1756]

This day moving forward Course SbW^t, att night the other 3 Ind^s. Came home. found where there had been fourteen tents pitched, but there were no buffloo about that that place

15 to y^e 17 [December 1756]

Smoaking And feasting and then parted and Six of the french Men, only one Stay'd with our Gang. [end p. 19]

1756 Dec^r y^e 18th.

This day Came to A herd of Beasts, there we Lay by for 3 Weeks.

19th to y^e 9th of Jan^{ry}. 1757

Lay by killing Buffeloo, no Beaver got as Yet no housses to be Seen, as for Wolves they will not take trap;²⁴

²⁴ The scarcity of beaver was indicative of what was to come. When they returned to the Bay, the Sturgeon Cree brought nothing but wolves to trade and reported that “they did not eat one beaver all the winter,” June 23, 1757, HBCA, B.239/a/42, quoted in Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree*, 111.

10th to ye 6th of Feb^{ry}. [1757]

Lay by Still till the beginning of February, when there Came two tents of Ind^s. to us again and the french Men Likewise who went off to their house and two Indⁿ. Men with them, there Came to our tents two Ind^s, who brought us the agreable news of the Ind^s. we wanted to find, twenty one tents of them and we sent tobacco to them

7th. [February 1757]

This morning we moved and went NbE^t. att night Came one Indⁿ, from the Gang. [end p. 20]

1757 Feb^{ry} y^e 8

Lay by and in the Evening the Ind^s. all Came up to us, there were two of Your Capt^{ns}. and one of the french Captains

9 [February 1757]

This day Came one Indⁿ, from the french, brought word, the french had no powder, att there house; and the[y] had never heard of us before, the french Men that was in our Company All winter always told us he would Certainly kill us but the Ind^s. Said if they did or offer'd to do any harm to us, they would kill them all.

10th & 11th. [February 1757]

Smoakt it, and then Six tents Sett out on purpose to go to Warr, having no Goods to trade that is to Come to y.^e factory with

12th. [February 1757]

This day went some of the tents away from Us. [end p. 21]

1757 Febry ye 12th.²⁵

This Morning we all moved Course NE^t, att night Came to the Ind^s, again

13 [February 1757]

This day Lay by.

14th. [February 1757]

This Day We all moved Course NNE^t, seed nothing but burnt woods

15th. [February 1757]

We went Course NbE^t, till night.

16 [February 1757]

This day moved on till night Course NbE^t,

17. & 18 [February 1757]

Lay by And the Ind^s, went from us. their Course north

19th. [February 1757]

This day We moved Course NE^t, nothing but burnt woods, in the Evening Came in to Green Woods, And Att night we put up att the side of a hill they [call] it Mouse hill there we kill'd five Mouse.

20 February 1757

Lay by the Ind^s, Dressing Skins. [end p. 22]

1757 Feb^{ry} ye 21st to ye 25th

Moving Course NE^t. & NbE^t,

²⁵ This entry is dated the same as the last, perhaps erroneously.

24. [February 1757]

This day moving Course NNE^t, Killed one Mouse.

25th. [February 1757]

Lay by bad Weather

26 [February 1757]

This Day sett out NE^t. Course Att night Came among the burnt woods again

27th. [February 1757]

Went for Some fatt we Left as we went up, Att night Returned with it.

28th. [February 1757]

This Day Moved Course NE^t. att night Came an Indⁿ. and brought the news of the death of two french Men, killed by the Sineypoets,²⁶ one he Said Was the Arm^r [Armorer], the other he did not know who he was.²⁷

²⁶ Nakoda.

²⁷ Seventeenth and eighteenth HBC century records frequently referred to the Nakoda, a Siouan-speaking people, as “Assinipoets,” “Sinnepoets,” or “Senipoetts.” These terms derive from Algonquian; the Cree called the Nakoda the “usinne-pwat” and the Anishinaabe said “asinii-bwaan,” which meant “stone Sioux.” Kelsey’s dictionary renders “Stone” as “As-sinne” and “Stony” as “Ass-sin-ny-wis-cau” in Ininimowin (the Cree language). The Nakoda had originally been members of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, or “The Great Sioux Nation,” before breaking away from the coalition of Dakota (Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Whapekute), Yankton, Yanktonai, and Lakota sometime before the arrival of Europeans in the Hudson Bay watershed. While maintaining their Siouan linguistic and cultural heritage, the Nakoda forged a powerful alliance with the Algonquian Ininéwak (Western Woods Cree) and western Anishinaabe. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Nakoda were increasingly referred to as “Assiniboine,” “Stone Indians,” “Stony Sioux,” or “Stonies.” The Assiniboine River in southwestern Manitoba gets its name from the “stone Sioux” appellation. We use the self-designation of “Nakoda,” which means “allies,” when discussing the Assiniboine people. For a discussion of Nakoda names, see Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 178; Edwin Thompson Denig, *The Assiniboine*, ed. J.N.B. Hewitt (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), xxviii; Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree*, 6, 172-186; David Meyer and Dale Russell, “The

March ye 1st [1757]

This day We Lay by And in the Evening Came four tents of Ind^s, to us **[end p. 23]**

1757 March ye 2^d.

This day one tent of Ind^s, went with some others to the Lakes to Make Canues.²⁸
Remained in Company, in all four tents.

3^d. [March 1757]

This day We moved to a River to Make our Canues, Att night got there, And was forced to go about twenty Miles to get birch,

4th to ye Fifth of May. [1757]

Remained till the fifth of may before we went in our Canues, but the River broke up in April, and the Snow Entirely gone before Aprill, was Expired. Sett out and padled down the River NE^t Course the Shores were flatt, on both Sides, and burnt woods; there Were the Waskesews²⁹ going in droves, We killed A great

Pegogamaw Crees and Their Ancestors: History and Archaeology in the Saskatchewan Forks Region,” *Plains Anthropologist* 51, no. 199 (2006): 317. For the Kelsey dictionary references, see Ray, *From the Frozen Sea to Buffalo Country*, 227.

²⁸ Canoes.

²⁹ “Wes::kesews,” an abbreviation of the Cree word “wawaskesiw” meaning elk or wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*). David Meyer and Dale Russell, “‘So Fine and Pleasant, Beyond Description’: The Lands and Lives of the Pegogamaw Crees,” *Plains Anthropologist* 49, no. 191 (August 2004): 229. In Smith’s later 1757–58 journal, Dale R. Russell notes that Smith writes “waskis” (waskisew) for Red Deer River, southwest of Lake Winnipegosis. Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree*, 112.

many, very good Living, for before we had nothing but Ruhigan,³⁰ & fatt; | This River is Called Soon Cipi.³¹ |

6th. [May 1757]

We Lay by Smoaking and feasting. **[end p. 24]**

1757 May ye 7th.

In the morning we Sett out Course NBE^t, untill noon then nne^t, att night we Came to the Lake Called Soon Sockahagan³² and put up for the night.

8th. [May 1757]

This day Sett out Course NbE^t, over the Lake, it is but small, there were four Islands, and the Shores flatt, with small poplar Growing on them, in the Evening Came to the River that Runneth betwixt the Lakes Course NNW^t, passing by four Bays & Six Bluffs, then We went NW^t, put up for this night, for We did not go far in a day by Reason their familys was with them, And they have so many dogs they Cannot Go farr.

9th. [May 1757]

In the morning Sett out Course NW^t, Came to A Lake, obliged to put up, Raining hard.

10 to ye 12 [May 1757]

A Continuance of Rain Could not stirr out. **[end p. 25]**

³⁰ “Ruhigan” seems to mean “pounded venison” based on a reference found in Andrew Graham’s writings. Andrew Graham observed that “The Indians likewise eat the flesh of all [polar bears] they kill, and mix the fat with cranberries, pounded venison [ruhiggan] etc. which constitutes one of their greatest dainties.” Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Andrew Graham’s Observations on Hudson’s Bay 1767–91* (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1969), 31.

³¹ Swan River. In Cree, “Cipi,” or more commonly “sīpiy,” translates to “river” Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree*, 110.

³² Swan Lake.

1757 May y^e 13th.

This morning sett out Course NE^t, untill noon then NbE^t, there we Mett with the Ind^s, that parted from us when we went to make our Canues, att night put up All together.

14th to the 17. [1757]

We all Lay by fishing but no Smoaking our tobacco was all gone. Then moved Course NE^t past one Island, then went NNE^t, We heard Guns, We thought it was Ind^s, but it was the french, going down with their Goods, Att night we Came to them, as soon As the Master ^{heard} we Were Come, he Sent for us, We went Immediately, And he Gave Me Some Muskesew³³ meat and it eat very well then some of his tobacco he behaved very well, | that place that the french Came to us they had 3 Mile Land Carriadge to the house.³⁴ |

18th [May 1757]

This morning the Ind^s. wen' and help'd them to bring their goods to the house.
[end p. 26]

1757 May y^e 19th

This day Employed bringing our things, About noon brought all Safe, the Ind^s, traded brandy, Att night the Master Invited us both in to his house, there was meat and fatt, but for bread he had none, then we Smoakt and drank brandy All together.

20th [May 1757]

This day they went away after trading with the Ind^s.

³³Wawakesiw or *Cervus canadensis*, see fn. 29.

³⁴The "3 Mile Land Carriadge" described by Smith is the Mossy or Swampy Portage, a narrow portion of the Pas Moraine (a high, well-drained natural causeway) that separates Lake Winnipegosis from Cedar Lake. Berthelette, *Heirs of an Ambivalent Empire*, 155.

21st. [May 1757]

This day did not move, there Came 3 Canoes and Join'd us.

22^d. [May 1757]

This day Sett out on our way for York: :Fort, Course NE^t, untill noon then NbE^t, into a River, and put up on purpose to kill Sturgeon;

23 to 25 [May 1757]

Rained hard, Could not move out of Our tents. **[end p. 27]**

1757 May y^e 26th

This morning Sett out Course North, Att noon Came to A small L'ke, Cross'd it Course WbN, the River that Runs from it So Shoal and So Many falls obliged to Carry the Goods, above A Mile then we went NbE^t, Course; to the place Where We Left our Canues, here they Left their familys.

27th. [May 1757]

This day Lay by Ind^s, Employed putting their familys to Rights.

28th. [May 1757]

This morning Sett out and from this place into the Lake Our Course North, And NE^t. till night we put up.

29 [May 1757]

This morning sett out our Course North, past two Islands then Course NE^t, untill night, Could not Go farr in a day, blowed very hard, and the Lake So Ruff that we Could not padle.

30th. [May 1757]

This day went NE^t, Course, passing by Several points, then we Steered North till we Came to the Rivers Mouth,³⁵ [end p. 28]

1757 May ye 31st.

This day the Ind^s, Lay by to kill Sturgeon, they being plenty, Att this place the Ind^s, told me You would have a house,³⁶ we went to see if there were any timber; there is timber it Runneth high; but not very Large.

June ye 1st [1757].

This morning Sett out Course NNE^t, pass'd by one point, Came to A Lake full of Islands, then to A River, Changed our Course And went ENE^t, put up for the night.

2^d. [June 1757]

This morning Steered Away Coarse East, but it blowed hard, Could not Go farr, obliged to put up.

³⁵ This begins Smith and Waggoner's trek north from Lake Winnipeg back to York Factory. Three tracks led from the interior to HBC headquarters at York Factory: The Upper, Middle, and Lower Track Routes. The Upper Track started at Cumberland Lake, up the Sturgeon-Weir River, over the Cranberry Portage, and then down the Grass River to the Nelson River at Split Lake. The Middle Track began on the lower Saskatchewan, to Moose Lake, and then down the Minago River to Cross Lake, before joining the Hayes River. The Lower Track started near the mouth of the Saskatchewan River at Grand Rapids, continued across the top of Lake Winnipeg, and then down the Hayes River. Whichever track route HBC traders followed, the Hayes-Nelson watershed was the gateway to the western interior and connected Hudson Bay to Lake Winnipeg, the Red River Valley, the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan, and the Northern Great Plains. An attempted reconstruction of Smith and Waggoner's route suggests that they took the Lower Track. For a map depicting the three tracks between Montreal and the interior, see Fig. I.

³⁶ Morton believes that this sturgeon fishery was at Little Playgreen Lake, near where Norway House would later be established by the HBC. Morton, *History of the Canadian West*, 251.

3^d. [June 1757]

Blowed hard all this day Could not padle.

4th. [June 1757]

This day padled NE^t, Cross'd a Small Lake, full of Islands, the natives Calls it Kemesew Sockahagan,³⁷ in the Evening Came to A River padled down it NE^t, pass'd by some points & falls, put up for the night. **[end p. 29]**

1757 June y^e 5th.

This day padled down the River Course NE^t, forced to Carry our things over, a fall past Severall Islands, then our Course NEbN untill we Came to marskeaker Lake, padled over it Course NE^t, in the Evening Came to another fall obliged to Carry our things as before about one Mile; this River they Call Wapeacornis Cipi Came to Another River full of falls, put up, for the night.

6th. [June 1757]

This day Sett out Course NE and N: past severall Islands, att noon Changed our Course & padl^d, SW^t, for a Little way; then NE^t, Course Untill We put up Att night.

7th. [June 1757]

This morning sett out Course SW^t, untill we Came to as Lake then North, Came to A River padled down it NE^t, obliged to Carry our things over a fall **[end p.**

³⁷ Kemesew may mean jackfish, or northern pike (*Esox lucius*), found throughout northern Canada. Isham's dictionary translates "a Jack fish" as "Ke-no-shue." Therefore, "Kemesew Sockahagan" may refer to the section of Smith and Waggoner's return journey between Knee Lake alternatively called "Jack River," "Little Jack River," or "Jack Tent River." Smith mentions catching jackfish twice in his journal, on September 10 and November 12, 1756. For Isham's dictionary, see James Isham, *James Isham's Observations on Hudson Bay, 1743 and Notes and Observations on a Book entitled A Voyage to Hudsons Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1949), 22. For "Jack River," see Barr and Green, *Lt. Aemilius Simpson's Survey*, 14.

30] then went west untill we Came to Another River padled down it NE^t, untill we Came to A Lake full of Islands, put up for the night:

8th [June 1757]

Sett out and padled NE^t, untill we Came to A Lake our Course South & SW^t, att noon Came to A River Run ENE^t, att night Came to Another River Course down it EbN put up. for y^e night

9th. [June 1757]

Sett out and Came to A Lake then to A River Course NE^t, this day padling Continually from Lakes to Rivers Untill we put up att night.

10th [June 1757]

This day padled down Rivers and Over Lakes Course from North to NE^t;

11th. [June 1757]

This day Course from NNE^t to NE^t. **[end p. 31]**

June y^e 12th [1757]

This day the Ind^s, Lay by, Rained hard.

13th [June 1757]

This morning Course NW^t, padled over a Large Lake.

14th. [June 1757]

This day Course NW^t. past by four Islands, and four falls, then our Course NNW^t untill night, we put up.

15th. [June 1757]

This day out Course NE^t over a Small Lake, untill we Came to Sockitton River³⁸
then NNE^t, full of falls & Islands

16th. [June 1757]

This day Lay by.

17th. [June 1757]

This day our Courses NbE^t, and NNE^t, from Reach to Reach then past 4 falls
put up for the night. [end p. 32]

June y^e 18th [1757]

This Morning our Course NbW, Came out of that River into Steal River.³⁹

³⁸ As stated in fn. 6, we believe that “Sockitton River” is Hill River northeast of Oxford Lake and Knee Lake.

³⁹ This is where Smith’s journal ends, on the recto of the nineteenth folio (twenty-seven additional blank folios follow). The party reached York Factory six days later. James Isham, York Factory Post Journal, June 24, 1757, HBCA, B.239/a/42.