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Vol./issue: 9  
Date: 1967  
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Article Author: Stager J  
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FORT ANDERSON: THE FIRST POST FOR TRADE IN THE WESTERN ARCTIC

John K. Stager* 

ABSTRACT

The economic and geographic aspects relative to the establishment of Fort Anderson, N.W.T., in 1861 and its final abandonment in 1866 are discussed.

RESUME

L'auteur a mis en relief les aspects economiques et geographiques relatifs a l'etablissement du Fort Anderson, T.N.-O., en 1861 et a son abandon definitif en 1866.

In the long interval between Alexander Mackenzie's exploration to the Arctic coast in 1789 and the building of a fort on the Anderson River in 1861, attempts to establish trade with the Eskimo people were at first neglected then later made with much caution. Mackenzie had only seen signs of Eskimos but did not actually meet them. Ten years later Duncan Livingston, attempting to repeat Mackenzie's journey, encountered hostile Eskimos below Arctic Red River, and the entire party of whites was slain (Wentzel, 1823, pp. 78,79). The disaster probably discouraged further adventures in this direction. Instead, early fur traders on the Mackenzie River were busy consolidating trade with the Indians and beating off competition from invading rival concerns. The North West Company, first in the region, was dominant until the 1821 merger with the Hudson's Bay Company, which then brought monopoly control and reorganization to restore the balance between fur resources and commercial service in the valley.

The image of Eskimos as hostile people developed early in the history of trade activity along the Mackenzie River. Loucheurs Indians visiting Fort Good Hope reported their frequent wars with Eskimos near Arctic Red River, the boundary of Indian-Eskimo territory, and that seldom did a season pass without some natives being killed (Hudson's Bay Company, 1825, p. 6). The fate of Livingston, and a threatening encounter with the Mackenzie Eskimos experienced by Sir John Franklin tended to confirm Eskimo malevolence (Franklin, 1828, pp. 99 ff.). The risks to personnel and property involved in carrying trade to these people might have been taken if there had been favourable reports of available fur resources, but fur wealth beyond the treeline was generally regarded as poor (Hudson's Bay Company, A/12/1, p. 265). Returning members of the Franklin expedition supported this view (Hudson's Bay Company, 1823-27, p. 6). Nevertheless, periodic efforts were made to encourage Eskimo hunters to visit Fort Good Hope. For a long time the invitations were ignored, probably for several reasons. The messages themselves were always relayed through Indians and mutual distrust existing between the two native groups was a serious barrier.

*Dr. John K. Stager is a member of the Geography Department of the University of British Columbia.
Besides, the Eskimos believed the whites to be allies of their Indian foe in whose territory they had built their forts (Hudson's Bay Company, A/12/1, p. 391). Moreover, the opportunity to trade articles of Russian origin through Eskimo groups along the Yukon and Alaska coasts was far safer and more welcome than any approach through hostile Indians.

After the establishment of Peel's River post – later called Fort McPherson – in 1840, overtures to trade were again extended toward the Eskimos. In the 1850's a few came to that post, at first bringing nothing, but promising to return with furs (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/32, p. 26). The strangers were handled with respect, only a few being allowed inside the fort at a time, and they were presented with gifts of awls, needles, rings, and glass beads. It was clear, however, even without an interpreter, that they were most interested in trading guns, ammunition, and tobacco. Gradually contact increased; in 1854 Fort McPherson reported an Eskimo trade valued at £100 and certainly other Eskimo furs reached the Company through Indian middlemen (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/32, pp. 54, 86; B/200/b/30, p. 89). To consolidate this traffic the Company adopted a more resolute policy and issued directives to point out such things as how to treat the Eskimos, caution in the trading of guns, requests that they stop oilying their furs, and how to promote peaceful relations between Indians and Eskimos – to the extent of paying compensation to Indians for Eskimo marauding. Eskimo trade tariffs were revised from a former two-thirds rate to coincide with Indian prices. This would encourage Eskimos to deal directly with Company posts instead of Indian middlemen, and would improve the hunting efficiency of both native groups. In addition, the Company introduced new items into the trade, like seal harpoons that were meant exclusively for the Eskimos. With time, larger and larger numbers of Eskimos appeared at the forts. Fifty Eskimos including seven from Cape Bathurst traded at Fort McPherson in the fall of 1855, and three years later this commerce, augmented by a winter trading trip to the Eskimo lands, realized a total of £1,000 (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/32, p. 137; B/200/b/33, p. 33).

The Company now began to show sympathy for continued requests by Eskimos to build a post in their own territory. At the same time the Mackenzie traders were aware of a large population of Eskimos, and if properly handled this would mean a great trade expansion. Living between Herschel Island and Cape Bathurst were perhaps 4,000 individuals, some of whom from the Delta area were already trading at Fort McPherson or La Pierre's House* (Stefansson, 1913, p. 452). East of the Delta at the mouth of the Anderson River and around Liverpool Bay lived a group of an estimated 500 Eskimos (Mackay, 1958, p. 39). Much less was known about the Liverpool Bay people or their lands but it was logical that James Anderson, Chief Factor in charge of the Mackenzie District, should show greater interest in an area without easy access to already established forts. Accordingly he directed the following questions to Roderick MacFarlane, in charge of Fort Good Hope, the post tributary to the Anderson River country:

1. Is the country between Good Hope and the coast (which is blank on our maps) hilly? Is there any timber at any distance from the Mackenzie or near the coast?

2. In what direction does the Peau de Lièvre [Hare Indian River] run, does it actually take in Bear Lake as the Indians report?

3. A river called the Inconnue or Beghullatess [Anderson River] which empties itself into the Arctic sea near Cape Bathurst – where does it take its rise – is it a rapid river – does it become dry in the summer? Any timber along its banks near the coast, or inland – how many days' march is the mouth from Good Hope – how many days' march is the nearest part of the river?

4. Are deer numerous in the vicinity of Liverpool Bay – is there any growing timber of any size or driftwood at or near it, any muskoxen, any martens, otter, beaver, or black and brown bears – any fish and of what kind?

5. Are the Esquimaux peacable in that vicinity and do your Indians have much intercourse with them – are they numerous?

6. Do the Barren Grounds extend to the coast – is there any timber to be found in clumps on them, or along the rivers? (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/31, pp. 61-65).

The questions were designed to learn not only the general geography of the region, but the possibilities for trade and support for a new post and its men. MacFarlane answered in a detail based upon knowledge of his Indians, and of the region (Figure 1). The mapping was confused. It is the fort, The accuracy of the

*Names in italics represent the historical name of spelling.
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detail based upon knowledge gained by questioning his Indians, and enclosed a sketch map of the region (Figure 1). He confirmed the forested lands were indeed hilly and included some high “mountains”. Furthermore, barren lands existed south of the Eskimo lakes and near the coast, similar in appearance to those east of Great Bear Lake. The drainage, he asserted, mostly flowed into the Béghullatessé River – the present day Anderson River. MacFarlane’s map shows the essential information described in his accompanying letter, including the fact that the Peau de Lièvre (Hare Indian) River did not drain from Great Bear Lake although it was navigable almost to the lake. Some idea of scale was furnished by indicating that Lac La Porte was “two spring days’ march” from Fort Good Hope and that another “fish” lake (presumably Beauvais Lake) was seven or eight days’ march from the post. The source of Anderson River was estimated to be seven days’ march, and the mouth.
days' march from Fort Good Hope. The river itself, MacFarlane learned, was navigable by boat from mouth to source with only four small rapids, and the current was strong in the upper reaches, but like the Mackenzie at Fort Good Hope, it was smooth and slow lower down. Furthermore, at the forks, Anderson River was as broad as the Mackenzie at Fort Simpson and enclosed by high banks; it had sufficient flow not to dry up in summer, and in spring the ice went out earlier than that of the Mackenzie (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/31, pp. 61-65).

In reply to questions concerning the resources of the region, MacFarlane quoted his Indians as saying that large "pine wood" was plentiful along the river and inland to within a day's march of the coast, and that timber of good size was available at the forks. Food animals like moose and caribou were in good numbers, and fish could easily be caught in the river and neighbouring lakes. Fur bearers included fox, marten, black or brown bear, and white bears on the coast, and the river itself had a good population of otters. The Indians claimed, however, that there were no beaver (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/31, pp. 61-65).

On the subject of Eskimo temperament and behaviour, the Indians were less certain; apart from the custom of Eskimos travelling upstream to the forks for spring and summer hunt of moose and caribou, little more information was forthcoming. MacFarlane, however, believed they were peaceable enough. In concluding this report, MacFarlane cautioned against complete faith in Indian descriptions, but himself believed in its essential truth. Moreover, he believed that the river

...would have to be explored and a treaty of peace effected between the Esquimaux and Indians before trade could be opened with the former. . . . At first, trade...might not be of much importance, but there is reason to believe, that when its benefits are felt by these people, and they become in a manner dependent on the whites for their wants, from their well known industrious habits they could assert themselves in a far greater degree than the Indians. . . . This trade could at no distant date embrace the whole Eastern Esquimaux indirectly through their countrymen of Liverpool Bay (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/31, p. 66).

In 1857 Roderick MacFarlane was the first white man to see the Anderson River country. Under Company orders, he left Fort Good Hope on June 9, and returned 41 days later having passed overland by foot and canoe to the forks of the Anderson, and thence downstream almost to the coast. Hostile Eskimos and timid Indian companions forced MacFarlane to abandon his canoes and return south over an inland route west of the Anderson. Subsequently, he explored east of the forks before reaching Fort Good Hope (Hohn, 1963). Trade prospects for the area were favourably represented by MacFarlane despite his difficulties with the natives.

All the reports and the recommendations of the Company men in the territory reflected local conditions, and were transferred to Sir George Simpson, who held an over-all knowledge of Company operations in North America, and made his recommendations to the Governor and Council in London. Opposing the favourable reports and Eskimo requests for a new post were some local voices who felt another establishment would support itself neither in food nor fur returns, and would succeed only in invading and disrupting the present profitable pattern of trade at neighbouring forts. Simpson, however, decided to have the Anderson River post built, and gave these directions to Mr. B. R. Ross, newly in charge of the Mackenzie District, by a letter dated at Norway House on 15 June 1859 (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/34, p. 56). One clear reason for this decision emerges from Simpson's wider grasp of trade conditions when he stated "The object of the fort...was to intercept the trade carried on by the Esquimaux with the Russian territory, with which they have been in the habit of carrying on their traffic" (Hudson's Bay Company, D/8/1, p. 27).

THE SITE OF FORT ANDERSON

The fort was built on the east bank of the Anderson River 114 miles upstream from its mouth in latitude 68°45'N (Figure 1). MacFarlane made the site selection during a short run downstream from the temporary camp at Shantyville at the end of May in 1861 (Hudson's Bay Company, B/6/a/1, May 30, 1861). He described it as follows:

...the banks [are] high and ground shingley and

firewood tolerably about one day's march off; not also in season, and the

forest can be suitable

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Esquimaux, some of

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48 GEOGRAPHICAL BULLETIN
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**LOCATION OF FORT ANDERSON**

Fort Anderson was built on the east bank of the Anderson River, 114 miles upstream from its mouth at 68°45′N (Figure 1). MacFarlane selected a site during a short stay in that area from the temporary camp at the end of May in 1861 (Hudson's Bay Company, B/6/a/1, May 30, 1861). His notes follow:

- High and ground shingle and
- Firewood tolerably abundant. Several fish lakes be...
- One day's march off; mose are numerous and deer also in season, and there is also a river fishery just below the place. We are also situated at such a distance from the wooded country beyond Shantyville as will enable us — thus far — to haul deer meat thither in winter, should we from any foresight cause unable to secure a sufficiency of provisions annually in fall for winter use. The Esquimaux, some of them hunt about this place in autumn and for most of the summer at no great distance below. A boat could go hence to the coast in one day; and I assume the latitude to be about 68° 1/2 N. I am of the opinion that the site I have selected is, considering all things, and especially as our returns will go out via the Arctic sea and Mackenzie River to Fort Good Hope which will enable us to see all the Esquimaux of that river... towering coastline -- the best for an Esquimaux post to be found on the banks of the Anderson (Hudson's Bay Company, B/6/a/1, May 30, 1861).

Most of the wood for the new fort was cut at Shantyville which was located on the right bank of the Anderson River upstream from its junction with the Carnawath River, called by MacFarlane the Lockhart River (Figure 1). The frames for the buildings and pickets for the stockade were fashioned as the wood was cut. All building materials were rafted downstream on two rafts, one 18 x 120 feet and a second 20 x 150 feet, in a difficult journey in which one raft was grounded then rammed by another. After much hard work, the delivery was made on June 9 (Hudson's Bay Company, B/6/a/1, June 9, 1861). By the end of August the fort had been completed except for finishing the building interiors.

The location of Shantyville was confirmed through the help of Mrs. Pat Barry of Inuvik and Mr. Simon Modeste who maintained a camp near in the 1920s. Mr. Modeste drew a map of the area and told of an old man, Yaone, one of the crew sent to cut logs for Fort Anderson, who gave him the information. Yaone claimed that the original place chosen by MacFarlane as the future site of Fort Anderson was mistakenly bypassed in the journey downstream and the logs rafts had to be tracked back upstream to the first good site. MacFarlane’s post journal does not record this incident.

There is very little remaining today of the old fort; pilfering and fire have removed nearly all traces. The site is marked by a wedge-shaped clearing on the river's right bank which extends 300 feet or more back from the water (Figures 2, 3). Grass has grown high where the soil has been disturbed. Traceable on the ground 25 feet from the present river bank is the outline of the picket palisades which form a rectangle 125 feet across the front and about 115 feet deep that marked the perimeter of the fort (Figures 4, 5). On the corners facing the river it is possible to discern the 4 feet square outlines of the bastions. Inside the fence on the north side is a long trench which was probably dug to provide coarse gravel to anchor the pickets themselves. Near the back, where there was a gate, is a hole some 5 feet deep and 20 feet across which might have been the old cellar dug for the provisions store (Hudson's Bay Company, B/6/a/1, July 6, 1861). Along the south side are three stone piles 2 feet high and 8 feet across, and another larger stone pile that could be excavation debris from other cellars, or have been used to support posts for the food stages. Within the compound were five buildings including a store and carpenter's shop in one, a double-walled house with two chimneys for the men-in-charge, another house for officers or clerks, a barracks for the remaining men, and at least one house for a married man. In addition there were two stages, one for meat and one for fish, each surrounded by shelters. The details of the fort and its buildings are gleaned from scattered references in the daily journal kept by MacFarlane (Hudson's Bay Company, B/6/a/1). Still to be found at the site is what remains of yet another storage stage, located outside the stockade; it was probably added after the first construction period (Figure 6). The buildings were constructed of log built around 6 x 6-inch square timber frames with the wall surfaces mudded inside and out with white soil brought from the vicinity of Shantyville. Red earth, possibly from the burning shingles that lie near the river between 69°10′N and 69°31′N, was used to paint the doors, and the buildings were topped with spruce bark shingles.

The best known published sketch of Fort Anderson was redrawn from an original executed by Father Emile Petiot (Hohn, 1963, p. 27). An earlier and more detailed drawing appeared in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, February 15, 1868, and was taken from
FIGURE 2
Site of Fort Anderson on the right bank of the Anderson River, in the foreground. The waterbody in the background is one of the nearby lakes. (Photo: J. R. Mackay.)

FIGURE 3
Site of Fort Anderson. The clearing, 300 feet deep from the river, is now overgrown with grasses. Commonly the disturbance of the natural vegetation is marked by grass, sedge and heath growth, and old places of human occupation may sometimes be inferred from such sites. There is little evidence of recolonization by trees in the 100 years following the post abandonment.

FIGURE 5
To the right is the standing post of the corner of the fort. To the left was likely a building or stage.
FIGURE 2
Site of Fort Anderson on the right bank of the Anderson River, in the foreground. The waterbody in the background is one of the nearby lakes. (Photo: J. R. Mackay.)

FIGURE 4
The charred end of one of the stockade pickets. These can be seen intermittently around the fort fence-line.

FIGURE 5
To the right is the lone standing post of the southeast corner of the fort. The small post with leaning member to the left was likely part of a building or stage.
the Petiot original then in the possession of the Smithsonian Institution. It is reproduced in Figure 7.

SUPPORT FOR THE FORT
Preliminary investigation of the country suggested that there was enough game to maintain a trading establishment. It was expected that local fisheries would be the mainstay, and meat, both fresh and dried, could be traded from the natives. During the building period in the summer of 1861, at least 20 men were at the site, although from time to time several were away fishing or hauling supplies. According to the information given by Yaone to Mr. Simon Modeste of Fort Good Hope 30 men were based at the fort during that summer. At least 12 men were continuously present (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/6/a/1). To support this population and set aside some food for winter reserve, the post received, according to the records in the Hudson’s Bay Company Folio (B/6/a/1):

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<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>July</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
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Assuming each man needed 4 pounds of meat and 1 fish daily, 12 men would consume over 8,500 pounds of meat and more than 2,000 fish. From this six-month tally there appears to have been enough food to feed the men, although very little to spare. The reported quantities of meat and fish included the relative plenty of the fall spawning period and the autumn migration of caribou, neither of which would be repeated until the next season. It seems, therefore, that at least in the beginning the period of abundance was only enough to keep the precarious balance of men against resources on the favourable side.

During the few years almost all food was supplied by the Hare Indians. When the staff was reduced no food crisis developed and the season was not likely to supply to the new fort, which was equally severely lucked out. The events contributed to the fort Anderson in 1865.

TRADE AT FORT
The opening of the Eskimos to engage the Eskimos in the fur trade there were probably 5 of the Anderson River who normally traded and who also be drawn to the upper Anderson River (Kay, 1958, p. 39). They had been introduced to intermittent contact with

FIGURE 6
Outside the stockade lie the ruins of a meat cache. Squared timbers with groove fittings and bored holes indicate the desire for carpentry using a minimum of nail support. Such nails as were used were probably made at Fort Simpson and brought overland from Fort Good Hope. The cache was designed to stand above the ground with a 6-foot clearance so that even after winter snow had accumulated, it would be out of the reach of dogs.
During the few years of the fort’s existence, almost all food was supplied by the Loucheux-Hare Indians. When building was complete, the staff was reduced to 4-6 men, and probably no food crisis developed. There were, however, complaints from Fort Good Hope which had, on occasion, to supply food for Fort Anderson men and dogs (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/33, p. 60; B/200/b/35, p. 62). In the autumn of 1865 scarlet fever and measles wiped out nearly all the Indian hunters for Fort Anderson; deaths in the whole Mackenzie district exceeded 1,000 people (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/35, p. 35). The food supply to the new fort was sharply reduced and placed an extra strain on Fort Good Hope which was equally pressed. Doubtless these events contributed to the decision to abandon Fort Anderson in 1866.

TRADE AT FORT ANDERSON

The opening of the fort was primarily to engage the Eskimos in trade, and at the time there were probably 500 living about the mouth of the Anderson River. Some of the Indians who normally traded at Fort Good Hope would also be drawn to the new post, but there were not many; perhaps 100 Indians frequented the upper Anderson River hunting grounds (Mackay, 1958, p. 39). The Eskimos had already been introduced to manufactured goods by intermittent contact with the Loucheux Indians and Mackenzie River Eskimos who traded in increasing numbers at Fort McPherson. The Russians were also extending their influence through an Eskimo trading chain eastward along the north Alaska coast. It was the intention and the hope that Fort Anderson would interrupt this trend and become the focus of Eskimo trade for the Hudson’s Bay Company. Unfortunately, the location was not central to the distribution of coastal natives; no one lived on the coast between Cape Bathurst and Coppermine River (Mackay, 1958, p. 40). It was, therefore, unfavourably placed to perform this function because the Mackenzie River Eskimos continued to trade in the Delta so that Fort Anderson was unable to attract increased commerce from the east or west and this disadvantage became a strong factor in the decision to abandon the post.

Trade routes

In the few years of its existence, the entire outfit of Fort Anderson, both goods and furs, was transported by an overland winter route from Fort Good Hope. Fort Anderson was essentially a tributary post. At least one summer canoe journey was made across to the headwaters of the Anderson, but it took a month (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/6/a/1, September 25, 1861).

The winter journey with dogs could be made in eight hard days, but on the whole was much less difficult than a canoe trip involving many

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat (lbs)</th>
<th>Fish</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,100</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In man needed 4 pounds of meat daily, 12 men would consume 60 pounds of meat and more than this six-month tally there appeared enough food to feed the men a little to spare. The reported meat and fish included the relative small spawning period and the fall of cariobou, neither of which would last until the next season. It was true that at least in the beginning abundance was only enough to cover a quarter of men against a favourable side.
portages. It was, of course, expensive to use dog teams to carry goods because several trips with extra men and dogs were required and this meant a heavier than average drain on the supply of prepared winter rations. As it turned out, Fort Anderson could not always meet this food requirement and extra provisions were taken from Fort Good Hope. Fort Youcon (early spelling for Yukon), operated its transportation in a similar way and in time of need drew on the provisions supply of Fort McPherson. Thus with two high-cost tributary posts the food resources of the entire district were soon involved and surplus provisions from Fort Liard and Fort Simpson were being trundled north to reinforce local supplies. Furthermore, it was an axiom of the trade that to push the provisions trade was harmful to fur returns and therefore undesirable (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/33, p. 59). Winter transport of goods and furs was expensive from another point of view because it meant a longer period was necessary for the completion of the business activities of Fort Anderson. The Mackenzie River posts had to allow three years to have requests filled. Under emergency conditions, however, an autumn letter could arrive in Montreal in a few months, the request be transmitted to London and, if acted upon immediately, goods could reach Montreal the following spring and the Mackenzie River in the course of the summer. In the reliable routine of Company organization, however, it generally took three years.

Furs traded at Fort Simpson would accumulate during winter, be packed in spring and carried to Norway House during summer brigade activities and forwarded to York Factory the next summer. They would then be sent to London and sold the following year. At least six years elapsed between the ordering of supplies and their repayment by the sale of furs. Fort Anderson required another year for the winter transshipment, and further added to the credit burden which the Company sustained to keep this outlet operating. It was, therefore, a more expensive post on two counts, the cost of transportation and the time required to complete the business of a single outfit.

Plans for an all-water route were advanced as a solution to the transportation/time dilemma. As early as the first year of operation at Fort Anderson, talk circulated about having a boat built for the river so supplies might be freighted around to the Mackenzie River, and indeed, MacFarlane himself expected it. It seems, however, that it was never more than a suggestion (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/33, p. 60; B/6/a/1, May 30, 1861). An easy and generally sheltered route from the Mackenzie Delta to Liverpool Bay exists via the Eskimo Lakes and is approached from the Delta side through Campbell Lake and a series of small ponds and streams to the southwestern end of the Eskimo Lakes. In 1875 this portage route was known, yet there is no record of anyone making the journey all the way to Liverpool Bay; at least the map of Petitet, the widely traveled priest, does not show it (Petitet, 1875, p. 29). On the other hand, there is local knowledge in the Delta among present inhabitants about this being the supply route to Fort Anderson, but the general evidence in the Company records favours instead the concept of the fort being operated entirely by overland winter travel from Fort Good Hope.

There is also the suggestion that a road was once constructed overland from Fort Good Hope to Fort Anderson, probably between 1862 and 1865, and has been described as an ox trail. Mr. Simon Modeste followed the trail from where it crosses Yatage River south to Good Hope, and describes it as being 8-10 feet wide cut through heavy timber. Local people claim as a fact that an ox team was used on this route to supply the Anderson post (personal communication, Mrs. Pat Barry, Inuvik). Once again, the records speak only of winter travel by dog team. It should be pointed out, however, that the last four years of Fort Anderson post journals, which may have recorded the use of oxen, are missing.

Trade returns at Fort Anderson

The opening of the new post was, officially at least, accompanied by considerable optimism and the returns were expected to reach £500 at the close of the outfit in May 1862. By August 1861, however, MacFarlane had his hand furs to the value of £407/13/-. mostly in fox skins of various kinds, and hopefully suggested the outfit would yield double the original estimate (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/34, p. 33). There was still the full hunt to come in, and also a spring hunt to form part of the first year’s large parcel Good Hope. Apart from the post journal, no figures to indicate the use of the post a few weeks after the outfit was established. MacFarlane said that the credit balances of the Bay Company, B/200/b/34, were one of the few reasons for the sale, in 1863, of the Fort Simpson Outfit.

Returns for the first year were probably above average. In May 1862 the fever reached the post. The fur trade was literally wiped out in 1862 (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/34, p. 35, 94). At the same time the whites and aborigines were suffering badly (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/34, p. 35, 94). It seems, therefore, that the economic survival of the Company had been between £1,000 and £1,200:

THE ABANIKAN INUIT

After the death of the Company’s post, MacFarlane decided to return to Fort Good Hope in 1862 and take over the operations. He was given some funds and the decision to try
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itself expected it. It seems, how-
ever more than a suggestion
(Company, B/200/b/33, p. 60-
80, 1861). An easy and gen-
route from the Mackenzie Delta
exists via the Eskimo Lakes
and from the Delta side through
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way to Liverpool Bay; at least
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rate (Hudson’s Bay Company,
B/200/b/3, p. 33). There was still the fall
and also a spring hunt to form

part of the first year’s operation. In December,
three large parcels of fur were taken to Fort
Good Hope. Apart from isolated remarks in
the post journal, which cannot be generalized,
o figures to indicate economic success or fail-
ure of the post are available. In 1864, Mac-
Farlane said that for two successive years,
previously Outfits 1861 and 1862, there were
credit balances of nearly £1,200 (Hudson’s
Bay Company, B/200/b/34, p. 83). In Febru-
ary 1864, without the completed spring hunt,
the fort had on hand nearly £1,000 worth of
furs; the Outfit of 1863 could easily have
matched 1861 and 1862 (Hudson’s Bay Com-
pany, B/200/b/34, p. 77). The next year, how-
ever, was one in which MacFarlane, always a
champion of the fort he had been instrumental
in locating, was forced to admit poorer returns
(Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/34, p. 77).
An estimate of revenue for four of five outfi-
its at Fort Anderson might be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outfit</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>£1,200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Returns for the last year at Fort Anderson
were probably about the same or less than
the previous year. In the summer of 1865, scarlet
fever reached the Mackenzie District and
literally wiped out the Indian hunters at the
new fort (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/
35, p. 94). At the same time measles broke out
among the Eskimos who blamed the disease on
the whites and avoided the fort, with the result
that both the provisions and fur trade fell off
badly (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/35,
p. 94). It seems, therefore, that the level of
economic survival for Fort Anderson must have
been between £1,000 and £500; once the fur
take fell below this mark, the post became a
drain on the Company.

THE ABANDONMENT OF FORT
ANDERSON
After the decrease of fur returns in 1864, it
was decided that the post should have two more
years in which to fulfill the expectations regis-
tered by MacFarlane (Hudson’s Bay Company,
B/200/b/34, p. 83). For some unexplained
reason this plan was abrogated, and instead
the decision to abandon the fort in 1866 was
taken by Mr. W. L. Hardisty, the Chief Factor
of the Mackenzie District. A reading of the
correspondence indicates that Hardisty was
never very enthusiastic about this post and
withstanding these feelings were made known to
the Company. Periodically, there were accusa-
tions that the new post only succeeded because
some of the Indians had traded on the Anderson
River instead of at Fort Good Hope where they
belonged. MacFarlane countered by re-
porting that the Eskimos were not used to provi-
dion trade, and that the Indians were needed simply
to hunt for food, not furs (Hudson’s Bay Com-
pany, B/200/b/34, p. 83). He also pointed out
that some items of trade were not the best
for the Eskimo. The tobacco, for instance, was
too strong, and the Company had not the
proper kind of beads which the Eskimos coveted.
In spite of these counter-arguments, Hard-
isty’s decision to abandon the site was upheld
by the Company management which welcomed
the relief (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/35,
p. 70).

Withdrawal from the Anderson River was
undoubtedly justified on economic grounds; the
difficulty of overland winter supply and its con-
comitant costs, and the decline in the fur re-
turns instead of the expected increase being the
main reasons. Granted, local disasters like the
epidemic of scarlet fever in 1865, and the death
of 64 sled dogs from distemper at the fort in
1864 were extra heavy burdens for a marginal
post to bear. Even the threat of removal was be-
lieved to have kept some Eskimos from trading
during the last year of its existence. Finally, as
a post to intercept and focus all Eskimo trade,
it was badly positioned, and the Eskimo returns
to the lower Mackenzie posts were scarcely
affected by the Anderson trade.

AFTERMATH OF THE ABANDONMENT
Orders given for the withdrawal from Fort
Anderson intended that it be carried out almost
in secret (Hudson’s Bay Company, B/200/b/35,
p. 75). Sleds were to be loaded with goods
and taken away before the Eskimos returned
upstream in the Spring of 1866 simply to avoid
their anger at the loss of a post and the risk of
damage to property and persons. Usually the
withdrawal of a post was accompanied by a
promise that a trading excursion would be
made from a nearby fort so that the break
would not be complete and both natives and

J O H N  K .  S T A G E R  55
the Company could benefit from limited contact. Such a journey from Fort Good Hope was planned but unfortunately did not take place for lack of trade goods at that station (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/35, p. 124). The Anderson River Eskimos once initiated to the trade, had now to reorganize their living patterns.

At the time of the opening of Fort Anderson, the Eskimos of that river maintained a separate existence from the Mackenzie Eskimos and were regarded by the latter with disdain, probably because the Anderson people suffered unfair trade arrangements. After the fort was in operation, these people were as well equipped with articles of white manufacture as their western neighbours and this equality removed animosity. When the fort was abandoned, however, the Anderson River natives sought trade with the Mackenzie Eskimos, and it was not many years before the two groups came together; in 1869 they wintered as one people (Hudson's Bay Company, B/200/b/38, p. 22). Furthermore, the epidemics of 1865 and 1867 were fatal to many Eskimos and the reduction in numbers likely encouraged the remaining people to join forces. Thus the coastal Eskimos were regrouped and moved to occupy the lands nearer to the lower Mackenzie posts. By the turn of the century the Anderson River valley was practically empty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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