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THE EXPLORATIONS OF THE LA VERENDRYES

IN THE NORTHERN PLAINS

1738-1743

by

G. Hubert Smith

edited

by

W. Raymond Wood

1978

ON MICROFILM

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December 18, 1978

Mr. Richard Strait  
Associate Regional Director for Planning  
and Resource Management  
National Park Service  
655 Parfet Street  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

Dear Mr. Strait:

Enclosed is a Xerox copy of a manuscript entitled "The Explorations of the La Verendryes in the Northern Plains, 1738-1743." This is a revised version of a manuscript originally prepared by G. Hubert Smith, entitled "Explorations of the La Verendryes, 1738-1743, with Special Reference to Verendrye National Monument."

The present manuscript is an updated and revised version of Smith's report, with no substantial change in content - Smith's conclusions still stand as he perceived them in 1950 - a remarkably perceptive job of writing!

Pursuant to Director Thompson's permission, granted 27 January 1978, for publication of this document, it has been reviewed by the University of Nebraska Press, and has been accepted for publication by them. The manuscript is therefore in near-final form. I am herewith complying with your request that you be permitted to review the document, the other condition for publication having been fulfilled; that is, that the role of the National Park Service in its genesis be acknowledged.

As it now stands, the manuscript has been reviewed by two anonymous referees for the University of Nebraska Press, one of them a historian, the other an archeologist. It has also been read by Alan R. Woolworth, and by personnel at the State Historical Society of North Dakota. Their comments have been incorporated into the text. A copy of this manuscript has also been submitted to the Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, for concurrent review.

The University Press would like to be able to publish the book soon, and my own teaching/research schedule makes it imperative that I complete the revisions by 1 February 1979. I would therefore

Mr. Richard Strait

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December 18, 1978

like to ask that the review by your office be completed by that date; if I have not heard from you by that time, I will assume there are no objections to its publication.

Thank you very much for your consideration in this matter. I believe the manuscript will be a credit to the National Park Service, and to my very good friend, Hubert Smith.

Sincerely,

*W. Raymond Wood*  
js

W. Raymond Wood  
Professor of Anthropology

WRW:js

enc

THE EXPLORATIONS OF THE LA VÉRENDRYES  
IN THE NORTHERN PLAINS,  
1738 - 1743

by  
G. Hubert Smith

edited  
by  
W. Raymond Wood

1978

## FOREWORD

The late G. Hubert Smith's study of the travels of the La Vérendryes in the northern Plains is a notable scholarly achievement and an important contribution to the field of history dealing with the exploration of New France in the eighteenth century. However, Smith's manuscript has passed largely unnoticed since its completion in 1951, due mainly to transient administrative matters relating to Vérendrye National Monument, a former unit of the National Park System in North Dakota. Smith's research was commissioned by the National Park Service as an effort to assess the historical authenticity of Vérendrye National Monument as a locality actually visited by the La Vérendrye parties. His conclusions served to provide the impetus for the abolition of the monument as an historical area administered by the Federal Government. To view Smith's study in its proper perspective, it is necessary to review the circumstances surrounding the creation and fate of Vérendrye National Monument.

Vérendrye National Monument consisted of 253.04 acres of land adjacent to the former town of Sanish in Mountrail County, North Dakota, set aside by Presidential proclamation on June 29, 1917 (Sullivan 1947:312).<sup>1</sup> Orin G. Libby, then Secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, had strongly advocated the reservation and administration of the area as an historical site under the aegis of either the State of North Dakota or the Federal Government (letters dated August 16 and September 14, 1916, from Orin G. Libby to Clay Tallman, Commissioner of the General Land Office; on file in the National Archives). Primarily at his instigation, the area was proclaimed a national monument. The monument was under the overall supervision of the Superintendents of Wind Cave National Park and, later, of Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park; a resident of Sanish

was appointed Custodian of the park. The single noteworthy feature within the park was Crow-Flies-High Butte (also known as Crowhigh Butte or Mountain), a 250-foot high prominence upon which was placed a granite boulder bearing a bronze plaque commemorating the presumed visits of the La Vérendryes to the locale.

An historian by formal training, Libby was the primary proponent of the idea that the two La Vérendrye expeditions had actually visited the Hidatsa Indians, rather than the Mandans as is commonly believed. He further maintained that the Hidatsa were at that time settled on the Missouri River a considerable distance above the Mandans, in the immediate vicinity of the mouth of the Little Knife River near the former town of Sanish (which has since been relocated and renamed New Town). This contention has not been accepted by all authorities concerned with the subject, and Smith's study constitutes an effective rebuttal of Libby's arguments. A number of historians, from Francis Parkman in the 1890s to Russell Reid, a contemporary of Smith's, have attempted to delineate the routes traveled by the La Vérendryes, but until Smith's work no comprehensive, in-depth review of the evidence was available on which to frame conclusions.

Although doubt existed as to the historical veracity of Vérendrye National Monument, the impetus for Smith's research was actually provided by the planning of Garrison Dam, a large dam across the Missouri River constructed in the late 1940s and early 1950s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. When completed, it was projected that the dam would back water up the Missouri valley for over a hundred miles and would result in the inundation of at least part of the monument lands. With this in mind, the Director of the National Park Service on December 28, 1945 recommended

a study to definitively assess the authenticity of Vérendrye National Monument.

Research for this purpose was undertaken by Olaf T. Hagen, Regional Historian in the Service's Region Two office in Omaha, but the effort ended in 1949 with Hagen's death. Consequently, the Regional Director of Region Two approached Dr. Grace Lee Nute of the Minnesota Historical Society, a noted fur trade historian, with a proposal for a comprehensive review of all available evidence pertaining to the explorations of the La Vérendryes in the northern Plains. Dr. Nute recommended G. Hubert Smith, an anthropologist recently employed by the Minnesota Historical Society, for such a task and on July 20, 1950 the National Park Service entered into a contract<sup>2</sup> with Smith for an exhaustive critical review of the subject. The contract provided \$3,075 for the research, which was to be conducted over a period of nine months, from July 1950 through March 1951. Throughout the study, Smith maintained close coordination with the newly-appointed Regional Historian for Region Two, Merrill J. Mattes, and obtained the assistance of several other eminent authorities on fur trade matters, including Grace Lee Nute, Abraham P. Nasatir, and W. Kaye Lamb. Smith consulted materials in the collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Public Archives of Canada, and both the French and U.S. national archives, among others, and his research led him to visit Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec, as well as the several places in the northern Plains reputed to have been visited by the La Vérendryes.

Smith's report, completed in April 1951, conclusively refuted several earlier erroneous assertions about the La Vérendryes, including Libby's

idea that the La Vérendrye parties had visited the vicinity of Vérendrye National Monument. He also provided several recommendations regarding the administration of the monument, among which was one to the effect that the park not be disestablished because of historical inaccuracy but rather that the monument be retained to commemorate the accomplishments of the La Vérendryes, accomplishments fully on a par with those of other early European explorers such as Coronado, De Soto, and La Salle. These recommendations were forwarded to the Director of the National Park Service by the Regional Director in a memorandum dated June 11, 1951, which also transmitted the original typescript copy of Smith's report.

Smith's work was reviewed at both the Washington and Regional levels of the National Park Service, and, in consequence of his arguments, the decision was made to recommend formal legislation to authorize disestablishment of Vérendrye National Monument as a unit of the National Park System. In 1954, Russell Reid, on behalf of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, expressed an interest in acquiring the monument lands for use as an historic site under the administration of the Society. Subsequently, in 1955 a bill<sup>3</sup> was introduced into the House of Representatives of the 84th Congress which would abolish the area and authorize the land to be conveyed to the State of North Dakota for use as an historic site and recreation area. The bill also reserved the right of the United States to flood the park lands as a result of the operation of Garrison Reservoir. On July 30, 1956 the bill was approved by Congress and Vérendrye National Monument was subsequently stricken from the roster of national parks (Tolson 1963:458). Today, part of the former monument lands lie beneath the waters of Lake Sakakawea.



It is ironic that G. Hubert Smith's research was used in support of the disestablishment of a park commemorating the achievements of a family in whom he maintained an interest through his long and productive professional career. On August 6, 1956, Smith wrote a letter to the Regional Director of Region Two to formally document his embarrassment "over having been mentioned as having found evidence to support the disestablishment of the former monument, since the decision of the Service, however necessary, conflicts directly with my recommendations [in the report]." Nevertheless, the overriding importance of Smith's work lies in the value of his scholarly contribution to knowledge of early European exploration in the Plains, not with the ephemeral consequences of his research.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas D. Thiessen

## AUTHOR'S

## PREFACE

About 1851, the newly appointed archivist of the French Second Republic, Pierre Margry, rediscovered forgotten records of the La Vérendryes in Colonial Office collections - papers that had miraculously escaped the fires of the first Bastille Day, and the countless other hazards to which such records are always subject. He published them at once (Margry 1852) in the new semi-official Paris daily, the Moniteur Universel. They thus became known to Francis Parkman, in Boston (perhaps copies were sent him by Margry), and when in 1888 he came to publish his own masterly account of this portion of the long story of the French regime in the New World, Parkman gladly acknowledged his debt to Margry, with whom he had long corresponded, as the source of his knowledge of La Vérendrye. But other students also seem to have known of Margry's discoveries in the history of New France;

thus George Catlin (1867: 4) mentions the brothers La Vérendrye and their accomplishments, perhaps having his information from the same published source. Margry had, on his own part, been much interested in Catlin's efforts in recording the appearance of the American Indians, in regions long familiar to French colonials, and now again to wistful Frenchmen.

The La Vérendryes seem unaccountably to have been neglected by the earliest historians of the Colony in Canada, though the family were descended from the first historian of New France, Pierre Boucher himself. Other authors writing from Canada, like Boucher, who unquestionably knew about the remarkable achievements of their compatriots from Trois Rivières, make little mention of them. That the accomplishments of this family were however never entirely forgotten is clear from a reference of about the year 1816, contained in a series of articles by "Mercator," appearing in the Montreal Gazette, concerned with the conflicting claims of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies, and with the justice of the Canadian claims, then a burning issue (Morton 1939: 583). Still more time was to elapse before the work of the La Vérendryes - accomplishments that were not at the time known to the

learned world, except in bits and pieces - could be seen in proper perspective.

A word is in order here, justifying the detailed annotation and analysis attempted here. The facts gathered by others, with their opinions, have been closely re-examined because of the fact that many of the earlier investigations were careless and slipshod - indeed, from the days of Margry himself. All too often, acceptable critical standards were violated. The writing of history has, of course, changed radically in the century since Margry's first newspaper articles of 1852. It is therefore proper to point out recognizable errors of fact, and of judgement, with which the topic has become encumbered, to the dismay of some students. The present effort endeavors to avoid inadvertent new errors, and the compounding of old ones, however tedious the process may seem.

To allude to the shortcomings of previous scholars is far from disparaging their solid results, and the present day student is heavily indebted to Margry himself, Parkman, Burpee, Crouse, Libby, Doane Robinson, George F. Will, and many others. As to Margry, whose hands were sometimes soiled in other historical ventures, it should be noted here that there is no hint of any wilful

misrepresentation on his part in connection with the La  
Vérendryes.

G. Hubert Smith

## EDITOR'S

## PREFACE

The history of the manuscript which led to this book has been fully treated by Thomas Thiessen in the Foreword. This has left me with mercifully little to say here, except to comment briefly on what I did with Hubert's manuscript, and to offer several comments about Hubert himself. Several changes were made in the manuscript under the urging of University of Nebraska Press editor Steve Cox; an anonymous historian referee of the original draft of Hubert's manuscript; and comments by various of my colleagues. I am especially indebted to Alan R. Woolworth and to Leigh Syms for constructive advice and criticism which materially aided in updating the manuscript.

Among other things, I have removed bodily an appendix which reviewed Hubert's objections to the authenticity of the location of the former Vérendrye National Monument near Sanish, or New Town, North Dakota. This appendix summarized all of the points previously covered in the body of the report, so it provided no new material.

Second, because his manuscript was written for his historian peers in the National Park Service, it was more heavily worded than one would expect in its present format. Consequently, his monographic style was lightened, and numerous redundancies were deleted or abbreviated, without altering the intent of what he had to say. Although more than a quarter of a century has elapsed since Hubert wrote the manuscript, all of his conclusions stand herein as he perceived them at the time. I found it necessary <sup>S</sup><sub>A</sub> only to update his references and to add published data which had appeared since 1951. In some cases, manuscripts he cited had later been published, and a number of reports written after his death have been cited to bring the references up to date. I have also had the advantage of access to Hubert's personal copy of his paper -- a copy which reflected changes Hubert made for several years following its submission to the National Park Service. I am indebted to Alan R. Woolworth and to the Minnesota Historical Society for this courtesy.

It is a tribute to Hubert's scholarship and attention to detail -- and his meticulous respect for the method of historical criticism -- that his manuscript merits publication so long after its completion, especially in this time of avalanching historical and archaeological data.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Hubert not only loved him, and learned so much from him, but admired his Old World manners and scholarship, and his impeccable standards of workmanship. If there is any sphere in which we might fault him, it was with his deeply rooted personal modesty — a modesty which combined with his deep respect for historical accuracy, and his conviction that truth is elusive — that inhibited the publication of this volume during his lifetime, and so denied us his insight for so long.

For those who <sup>may</sup> wish to consult the unedited manuscript, the original typescript copy of his work, entitled "Explorations of the La Vérendrye's, 1738-1743, With Special Reference to Vérendrye National Monument" (dated April 1951), is in the office of the Director of the National Park Service. Copies of it are on file at the Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln; at the Theodore E. Roosevelt National Memorial Park, Medora, North Dakota; in the Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; and in the editor's files.

W. Raymond Wood

February 1978

Columbia, Missouri



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the preparation of this study I have had the help of numerous persons, including Dr. Grace Lee Nute, Minnesota Historical Society; Dr. George F. Will and Mr. Russell Reid, State Historical Society of North Dakota; Dr. Abraham P. Nasatir, San Diego State Teachers College; the staff of the Missouri River Basin Survey<sup>S</sup>, Smithsonian Institution; and the staff of the Regional Office, Region Two (now the Midwest Region), National Park Service. The interest of these and numerous other persons is most gratefully acknowledged. I especially acknowledge the interest and assistance of Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, Dominion Archivist, and the staff of the Public Archives of Canada, and Dr. Nasatir's courtesy in loaning galley proofs of the introduction to his important study, Before Lewis and Clark.

G. Hubert Smith

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^  
State

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Possible other plates:

French compass and/or wind rose  
Libby/Parkman/Margry/Burpee/Thwaites  
Smith frontispiece  
From Bernie: eastern N.D. prairies

## THE FUR TRADE AND THE SEARCH FOR A SEA OF THE WEST

The fur trade is sometimes regarded as the most important single topic in the <sup>early</sup> history of much of Canada and the United States. For more than two centuries, in a vast part of North America, the history of this commerce is the framework upon which other historical themes must be spread. There were of course other themes of major importance, but no understanding of the general history of this part of the New World is possible without an appreciation of this basic commerce. Even discovery and exploration<sup>#</sup>were, in large part, aspects of the fur trade.

The career of the La Vérendryes is a significant episode in the history of New France. No overall account of this trade, however, is here attempted. Detailed studies of the trade in its broad aspects, such as Innis's The Fur Trade in Canada, deal with this period fully, and it would be presumptuous to attempt a restatement. Other works, such as Morton's History of the Canadian West, treat

the French régime in relation to world affairs, with emphasis on political as well as on economic and social events.

The activities of La Vérendrye and his group are here dealt with as an episode of the French régime during a time of wide and rapid territorial expansion under determined, capable leadership, and with constant reference to the major theme: the fur trade. Attention is focused especially on personal, local, and specific events for the period 1738 to 1743, when the family penetrated to the Missouri River, and beyond. This is especially desirable in view of the fact that, although sympathetic attention has been given the topic by a host of historians since the days of Pierre Margry and Francis Parkman, numerous misunderstandings -- not to mention several serious errors -- have become embedded in even the best accounts of their travels. Other works are but fiction.<sup>1</sup> The historical data therefore deserve yet another review, in the light of new and more abundant evidence.

"New France" is here used as the most appropriate term for the area of our concern. The boundaries of New France were never precisely determined, but the area included much of what has become Canada and the United States, for the two major divisions of New France were

Canada and "Louisiana." Much of the latter was purchased by Jefferson in the Louisiana Purchase.

The special reasons for the rapid expansion of the fur trade westward from the St. Lawrence after the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the necessity of opening new regions capable of producing furs, are well known.<sup>2</sup> Old hunting grounds in the drainage of the St. Lawrence and the lower Great Lakes, long heavily exploited, were being depleted. At the same time, competition from the English, through the Hudson's Bay Company, was being intensified. Expansion of the fur trade in New France, upon which the very survival of the colony depended, had been seriously interrupted by international wars at the turn of the century. With the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, the colony was able to actively pursue the fur trade once again. Yet the provisions of the treaty were severe for France, the loser in the War of the Spanish Succession, for the English had regained control of Hudson Bay, temporarily given over in the course of the wars.

Confined between the English on the north and the Spanish to the south and west, New France could now only expand in a transcontinental, generally westward direction. Thus it was that La Vérendrye appears in 1727 as commandant of the "Posts of the North," probably the

first appointment to a new administrative division of this ill-known but tributary hinterland of the settlements along the St. Lawrence.

New France was fortunate at this time in having as governor-general Charles de la Boische, <sup>the</sup> Marquis de Beauharnois, who for two decades after 1726 guided her development with honesty and ability. That his own previous career had been largely in the military explains in part the military organization of such regions as the Posts of the North, though the fur trade throughout its entire history was frequently vested in military terms. That the governor was fully aware of the urgent need of measures to combat foreign competition in the <sup>fur</sup> trade is clear from his succinct remark that "If the savages find the French on their passage, they will not go in search of the English" - that is, to Hudson Bay.<sup>3</sup>

Another topic of special concern, closely related to the fur trade of New France, and of particular interest during the time of the La Vérendryes, is the matter of the search for a Sea of the West, which would afford passage to the Indies. This last topic has been studied in detail by Crouse, Delanglez,<sup>4</sup> and others. The search was one manifestation of a renewed scientific interest in the natural world, having its origins in still earlier periods.



But it was more than this. As with the parallel search for a Northwest Passage by the English, also long continued, these activities of the French had obvious political and economic implications. The search for a western sea appealed strongly to the cultured French, fond of the arts and learning, and her court saw in a successful quest added prestige for the throne of the Bourbons, as well as a more favorable balance of world power.

Even before the opening of the eighteenth century, and in large part as a result of the remarkable previous achievements of the French colonials themselves, the attention of the court at Versailles and of colonial administrators at Quebec had concentrated on this goal, beyond the already-known Great Lakes.<sup>5</sup> Although they speculated on the character of the region to be crossed, they could scarcely have comprehended the vast distances involved. It is <sup>also</sup> understandable that the scheme of the search should have been based on the hope of a water passage to the East: all previous experience in New France had shown it to be a land of lakes and streams and many waters. Exploration had proceeded with ever-accelerating speed on these primitive highways.

The French and French colonials seem not to have fully appreciated the fact that they knew but a small part

of the whole; the true character of the geography of the continent beyond this northeastern land of woods and waters had not yet been discovered. But how could they have guessed that beyond this region were vast prairies and plains - vaster even than their familiar woodlands - and beyond, the great Rocky Mountains, extending from arctic to tropic? Even informed geographers were ignorant of the character of this part of the continent and, as late as 1752, Joseph N. Delisle, one of the ablest and best informed of European cartographers, still showed the goal on one of his maps - a Mer de l'Ouest.<sup>6</sup> Many accounts, both real and apocryphal, of voyages of discovery on the Pacific were influential in reviving and stimulating, early in the eighteenth century, an interest in the Sea of the West - an interest that had probably never really disappeared, though it frequently became  
^ dormant.

The speculations of one Father Bobé, an obscure Paris cleric, exemplify the interest that many people had in this subject just before the western explorations of La Vérendrye and his group.<sup>7</sup> Bobé's choice of routes for the search was the waterway west from Lake Superior, though he considered other possibilities. This route was already known in part to adventurous independent traders

in New France. One such pioneer was Jacques de Noyon, who had gone trading, probably in 1688, as far west of Lake Superior as Rainy Lake, and had gained some knowledge of the region beyond, as far as Lake of the Woods. Even further west, he had been told, was a "western sea" - probably Lake Winnipeg.

In 1716, officials of New France urged formal explorations in this direction, and referred to the knowledge gained by de Noyon. It is clear that they were particularly concerned about the commerce of New France, for they proposed the establishment of trading posts along the route to intercept the Indian trade that was going to the English on Hudson Bay. After these posts were established, they suggested, a small expedition could be sent out to the Western Sea. Their proposals found royal favor, and were approved even to the extent that a decree was issued that the necessary expenses should be borne by the King. The result was the establishment, the following year, of the first such western post, at Kamanistikwia, by Zacherie Robutel, the Sieur de la Noue, and an expedition as far as the region of the Sioux, to obtain peace between them and the tribes of the forest regions. Officials of the Hudson's Bay Company at York Fort became aware at once of the French penetration.

"Under the thin veil of the Search for the Western Sea," the French were aggressively pushing the trade in the border lake region in what is now Minnesota, Ontario, and Manitoba.<sup>8</sup>

A significant record of the quest for geographic knowledge at this time has been preserved. Keen interest at court in exploration led to the dispatch of the Jesuit scholar, Father Pierre-Francois-Xavier Charlevoix, to Canada, to make personal inquiries concerning the best means of searching for a Western Sea, and to undertake a preliminary reconnaissance himself. He spent the years 1720 and 1721 in "interviews and inquiries," and in traveling by way of the Lakes and the Mississippi River to its mouth. In his reports, submitted in 1723, he urged exploration up the Mississippi or Missouri rivers and, faithful to his vows, he did not fail to advise the establishment of a mission among the Sioux where, he suggested, missionaries could gather information on the matter of the search for the Western Sea.<sup>9</sup>

Jesuit missionaries were assigned to this duty among the Sioux on the basis of his recommendations, but further exploration was not undertaken at this time. A fort was, however, established in 1727 by René Boucher, the Sieur de la Perrière, among the Sioux on Lake Pepin, on the

upper Mississippi River, which was christened Fort Beauharnois, and whose spiritual advisors were the Fathers Michel Guignas and Nicolas de Gonor. It is of course significant that the post was established by a commercial company, licensed by the governor, and that Beauharnois himself was its most prominent shareholder. One purpose of the venture is revealed by his statement that this post was needed to insure the success of La Vérendrye's undertaking. As far as New France was concerned, it was essential that the Sioux should be friendly, "to allow of our trading with the Assiniboin and Cree, through whose country one must pass to the discovery of the Western Sea."<sup>10</sup>

The search for a Western Sea held a special appeal for the Jesuits, patrons of learning and ever seeking new mission fields, as well as for the court "whose desire for fresh geographical knowledge was an adornment to their characters and an honour to their time."<sup>11</sup> The point of view in New France was, however, somewhat different; the search, with its ever-receding goal, "never failed to minister to the expansion of the colony and to bring about a recovery of its fur trade when the beaver areas were depleted." Thus, the search was made to serve the economic needs of the colony, to which it was specially suited.

It was the steady policy of the colonial administrators to encourage interest in the Sea of the West, "but always on the assumption that forts for fur trade would be established and the exploration as such relegated to some more convenient season." If this season never came, "no great harm would be done, for French arms would have been carried far afield and the stream of French furs would continue to flow through full banks." Such was the official view or policy at Quebec before La Vérendrye's time, and it helps explain his enterprise and the unfailing support he received from governor and intendant at Quebec, as Morton has pointed out. When La Vérendrye proposed to open these western fur fields, already known to be rich, his proposal very naturally won official support in New France. An added inducement - one calculated to win the support of the court and of influential Jesuits - was that such expansion "offered some promise, however distant, of an easy route by canoe to the long-dreamed-of Sea of the West, wherever that might be."<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Something must now be said of the native peoples living near the Posts of the North, among whom La Vérendrye and

his group were to spend so many years. Two such groups, especially important because of the role they played in French expansion westward from Lake Superior, were the Cree and the Assiniboin. Related to the Cree, in some now-obscure manner, were the Monsoni, a smaller group. The Cree and Assiniboin are of concern because they were not only consumers of goods and producers of pelts, but because they also played the very important part of middlemen, trading goods received from the French for furs they obtained from more distant tribes, as well as their own furs, and thus returning pelts to the French in greater quantities than would otherwise have been possible.

Known long before the 1730s, when La Vérendrye came upon the western stage, these two tribes of the country north and west of Lake Superior had been visited by the first traders and explorers in the area. As early as the 1650s they had been known to Des Groseilliers and Radisson, trading on Lake Superior.<sup>13</sup> A map of New France, published by Father François Creux in 1660, preserves a memory of these first contacts.<sup>14</sup> By 1671, when the famous Jesuit map of Lake Superior was published, their range beyond Lake Superior was well known to the French.<sup>15</sup>

The location of posts at Kamanistikwia and on Lake Nipigon, by Du Lhut and his brother, the Sieur de la Tourette,

in the 1670s and 1680s, is ample evidence of the attention given by the French to the trade of this region at this time.

The Cree and Monsoni were members of that vast group of Native Americans who spoke dialects of Algonquian, a language stock named from that of the first native groups met by explorers along the lower St. Lawrence. Among other members of this large language family were numerous tribes especially prominent in the history of New France: the Ottawa - like the Cree, long famous as middlemen in the fur trade; the Chippewa, sometimes known as the Saulteurs; the Sauk and Fox; and others.

All of the native tribes had a certain uniformity of culture. Their livelihood was derived chiefly from individual hunting and fishing. The migratory character of the game upon which the Indians depended, together with seasonal fishing, explains much of the nomadism which typified these peoples. The balance between climate, topography, soils and waters, and the food supply was always a precarious one in this region. The great physiographic area north of the Great Lakes, the Laurentian shield, is dominated by woodlands, becoming generally poorer and less hospitable as one moves toward the north. It is an area of ample rainfall, but of poor soils ill-adapted



to native farming and, in any event, having too short a growing season to permit full native dependence on gardening. The area is one of abundant fur-bearing animals, of birch bark and other useful wood materials, and it was destined to be heavily exploited by both French and English fur traders.

The Cree once inhabited a vast area, ranging from the western shores of James Bay (the southernmost extension of Hudson Bay) to the southwest, past Lake Nipigon, through the border lakes country, and toward Lake Winnipeg. Nomadic bands inhabiting so vast a region, their movements and occupations closely adjusted to a variable and migratory food supply, <sup>they</sup> had no broad social or political organization. It is therefore not surprising that the surviving records of these peoples during early contact times are scanty, and often contradictory and confusing.

Even the very divisions of the Cree are in doubt, largely as a result of poor accounts for the period of first contacts during the seventeenth century. At an early date the Jesuits recorded that the Cree consisted of four major divisions. Of these, the group living about Lake Nipigon is mentioned first, and were doubtless that part of the Cree that is best known. During the nineteenth

century, two major divisions of the Cree were commonly mentioned: the Plains Cree and the Woods Cree, and the group is so described by ethnographers today.<sup>16</sup> But this modern classification takes little account of the changes induced by contact with Europeans for more than two centuries. In any case, it is now impossible to do more than reconstruct - with no great degree of certainty - the nature of the original tribal lifeways.

The early history of the Assiniboin is little better understood than that of the Cree, for again, we lack adequate early documents. Native tradition is authority for the belief that the Assiniboin split off from a parent group (probably the Yanktonai Dakota) late in prehistoric times - perhaps about 1640, just before the Assiniboin became known to the French. The area occupied by the Assiniboin at the beginning of the historic period appears to have been south of Cree territory, and they seem to have been friendly with them before either were known to Whites. The Assiniboin were the most northern branch of the great Siouan language stock, which centered about the Eastern Dakota (usually referred to as the Santee Dakota), then occupying the region of Mille Lacs Lake, in what is now Minnesota. This language stock included such other groups as the Yankton, Yanktonai, and Teton Dakota,

as well as the more distantly related Omaha, Iowa and Missouri. The Winnebago, the Mandan and Hidatsa, and others, were also Siouan-speaking tribes. The remarkable earth lodge cultures of the upper Missouri River - those of the Mandan and Hidatsa - will be given special attention in later pages.

\* \* \* \* \*

It should be emphasized that the western explorations of the La Vérendryes, especially their travels in 1738 to 1743, southwest of the region of the present day city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, were not isolated events in the history of New France. Rather, these journeys were final acts in a play <sup>at least</sup> begun a century before, in explorations westward from the then tiny settlements on the St. Lawrence. They were, moreover, related to other contemporary efforts (both official and unauthorized) on the part of French colonials from New Orleans, the other center of French settlement in the New World. This fact seems to have been overlooked by some scholars, intent upon the record of the achievements of the La Vérendryes. Some students of La Vérendrye, indeed, seem to have been quite unaware of the fact that a great deal had already

been accomplished in the exploration of the Missouri basin from New Orleans, and that La Vérendrye, in 1738 and 1739, missed meeting - by only a few months - other French traders and explorers who had gone by way of the Missouri and its tributaries as far north as present South Dakota, at the same time he had reached the region by pushing westward from Lake Superior. The history of the progress of exploration up the Missouri River, from the first French efforts, has been told in detail by Nasatir.<sup>17</sup> It is necessary here to do little more than summarize the major events of this penetration from the south.

The first important effort to trace the course of the Missouri River to <sup>ward</sup> its sources appears to have been that of Étienne Veniard, the Sieur de Bourgmont, at one time commandant at Detroit. Details of his life are obscure, but enough has been preserved to justify the epithet of "adventurer."<sup>18</sup> Having deserted his command at Detroit, Bourgmont fled to Louisiana some time after 1707, where he lived among the Indians of the lower Missouri for at least a decade. During these years he seems to have wandered far, though the regions he visited are uncertain. In <sup>about</sup> 1717, however, he composed a memoir, which has fortunately survived, describing the course of the Missouri as far upstream as the Arikara villages, who were the downstream

neighbors of the Mandan and Hidatsa. The Arikara were members of yet another major language stock, Caddoan, to which the Pawnee also belonged. From the evidence of another document prepared by Bourgmont, dated 1714, it appears that most of his travels were made in that year, and the document provides his itinerary.<sup>19</sup>

Various memoirs from Louisiana, for the years 1716 to 1719, sought to draw attention of the colonial ministry to the Missouri River as a route to New Mexico, long a matter of special concern in Louisiana.<sup>20</sup> In 1719 the Missouri and Osage rivers were ascended by an official expedition under the command of Charles Claude du Tisné, which met the Osage and Pawnee Indians, and obtained information concerning the Padoucas (Comanche).<sup>21</sup> Now Bourgmont appeared once more, as a commandant of the Missouri region, and in 1723 he established a post on the north bank of the Missouri in what is now Carroll County, Missouri, which was named Fort <sup>d'</sup>Orléans. From this fort Bourgmont established relations with the Missouri, Kansa, Ioway and other tribes. Events of this period on the lower Missouri River do not concern us here, but it is of note that as early as 1734 a fur trader among the Pani-mahas (the Skidi Pawnee, <sup>living</sup> in what is now Nebraska) is mentioned by Bienville, the governor of Louisiana, as having visited the Arikara.<sup>22</sup>

About the year 1739, commercial relations had been established between the French colony in Louisiana and the Spanish settlements in present day New Mexico. At the same time, the <sup>actual</sup> occupation of the Missouri valley had been pushed as far west as the present state of Kansas. Fort Cavagnolle was built at a site in the region of what is now Kansas City, and the same year the brothers Pierre and Paul Mallet succeeded in reaching Taos and Santa Fé by <sup>first</sup> following the Platte River, then pushing through the country occupied by the Comanche. The Mallet brothers came into contact with some of the Arikara at this time, as Bourgmont seems to have had at an earlier date, but it is ~~improbable~~ <sup>not certain</sup> that the Arikara had as yet actually been visited in their own villages, which at this time appear to have been in what is now central South Dakota.

The westward explorations of the La Vérendryes thus closely coincided with explorations from the south, but likewise reaching toward the northern Plains and the upper Missouri River. In one instance the objective was the discovery of a Sea of the West, which should afford passage to the <sup>far</sup> East; in the other, the objective was to establish routes from the Mississippi and Missouri rivers toward the settlements in New Spain. Each effort at penetration had a distinct commercial overtone, though

of a somewhat different character; each contributed, however, to the geographic knowledge of the realms of Louis XV of France.

2

## HISTORY OF THE LA VÉRENDRYES TO 1738

French colonials had begun to acquire knowledge of the region beyond Lake Superior toward Lake Winnipeg well before the end of the seventeenth century. It was not, however, until the establishment of <sup>a new</sup> ~~the~~ western command in 1727 that systematic and official exploration and occupation of the region began in earnest. This turning point in the affairs of New France was marked by the rise of La Vérendrye who, with the assistance of his four sons, his nephew, and a group of business associates, capably managed the region for nearly twenty years. If in the sequel La Vérendrye found himself out of favor and financially ruined, there is no hint in the surviving sources that he was in any way incompetent; if he died in poverty, his failure was in large part a result of forces beyond his control. And he must at times have felt pride in the knowledge that his efforts had carried far afield the flag of France, had served well the interests of the colony, and had greatly increased geographical knowledge.



Between Quebec, governmental center of New France, and Montréal, its commercial center, lay the village of Trois Rivières (Three Rivers), settled even before Montreal itself, probably in 1634. This settlement lay at the junction of two major fur routes, the St. Lawrence-Ottawa and the St. Maurice rivers, and became "a great nursery of valorous explorers and fur traders."<sup>1</sup> Among other well-remembered names from this village are those of Jean Nicolet, Des Groseilliers, Radisson, and Nicholas Perrot. But none is better remembered than Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, the Sieur de la Vérendrye. Even today, at Three Rivers, the civic monument to the memory of such men carries, beneath a fanciful bust of La Vérendrye, the legend: "The most illustrious of the Trifluviens." High praise has also been paid him by more sober historians. Innis, in fact, remarks that La Vérendrye achieved no less than establishing the present boundary of Canada.<sup>2</sup> Morton goes on to say that "Champlain made the East and La Vérendrye grasped the West for the French. Together, they made the French masters of little short of a continent - of a vast domain which smaller men were to lose."<sup>3</sup>

Pierre Gaultier, the fourth son of René Gaultier de Varennes, governor of Three Rivers, was born there on November 17, 1685. The original record of his birth is

still preserved in the parish register.<sup>4</sup> Little is known of his early years, but it cannot be doubted that he was nourished on the fur trade, in which his father was active. He must have heard - often at first hand from such venturesome members of the community as de Noyon and Perrot - much of the lore of the western waters that he himself was to make known to the world.

La Vérendrye's ambitions seem to have first been fixed on a military career, and he entered the army (as was then possible) at the age of twelve. After serving in raids on the borders of New England and in Newfoundland, he took part in the campaigns in Flanders. Years later he compiled his own "service record," from which we know he was severely wounded in 1709 at the Battle of Malplaquet, one of the last engagements between French and English forces in the War of the Spanish Succession, and was a prisoner for fifteen months.<sup>5</sup>

A reduction of the army with the impending treaty of peace probably left little hope of promotion for a colonial officer "of limited means and influence," and he returned to his home in 1711.<sup>6</sup> Even before his service in Flanders he had, in the formal old French fashion, contracted to marry Marie-Ann du Sable, daughter of Louis Dandonneau du Sable, the Sieur de l'Ile du Pas.<sup>7</sup> If he

was but a poor colonial, without interest or favor in the mother country, the future explorer in Three Rivers had the best of connections.

Little is known of his life immediately following his return from the wars, except that he had a trading post on the St. Maurice River called La Gabelle ("The Excise Tax") — the name of which was probably a thrust at governmental revenue-producing devices. The post was at a point "well calculated to catch the traffic with the Indians before it reached the town."<sup>8</sup> We may assume that the post was a profitable one, for at the time of his appointment to the Posts of the North, La Vérendrye seems to have had a great deal of influence well beyond Three Rivers.

His marriage, performed at Quebec in the fall of 1712, produced four sons and a daughter. These sons were to play a major part in the work of their father, and they were heirs of his ability.

The eldest son, Jean-Baptiste, born September 5, 1713, accompanied his father to the west as early as 1731, and himself established the first Fort Maurepas, on the Red River, three years later, a task assigned him by his father. Jean-Baptiste's skill in dealing with the Indians is evident during his short life, which ended on Lake of the Woods

when he was only twenty-three. The hints we have of his personality suggest that he was fully at home among the Indians, perhaps more so than he would have been at his own birthplace.

The second son, born December 26, 1714, and named Pierre after his father, was a steady, reliable assistant. Like his older brother, Pierre was with his father in the west as early as 1731, and some ten years later himself founded Fort Dauphin, probably on Lake Manitoba. He seems to have been a "good right arm" for his father, whom he survived. The last glimpse we have of him is as an ensign of foot at Quebec, where he died in 1755.

The third son, François, born December 22, 1715, is of particular interest, for he was the Chevalier who, with the fourth and youngest son, in 1742 and 1743, visited the upper Missouri River, penetrating well beyond the river itself and their father's furthest reach.<sup>9</sup> François had joined his father in 1731, and accompanied him on his visit to the Missouri River in 1738. The next year he explored along the Saskatchewan River. After his father's death, François obtained a commission in the army, and served in the final struggle in New France, in the Seven Years' War. Becoming a British subject, François lived unmarried at Montreal, and here, one of the first

White men to reach the northern Plains beyond the Missouri River, he died in 1794, the last of the immediate family.

Louis-Joseph, born November 9, 1717, the youngest of the sons, joined his father in the trade in the west in 1735, having been specially trained in mathematics and drawing, and accompanied him to the Missouri River in 1738. After his subsequent journey west of the Missouri with François, Louis-Joseph also served in the army. In 1761, he was drowned in the shipwreck of the Auguste, which was carrying colonials <sup>returning</sup> to France.

Another member of La Vérendrye's staff was a nephew. His name, had he survived the hardships of the trader's life, might have been as well remembered as that of his uncle and his cousins. This was Christophe Dufros, baptised December 7, 1708, at Varennes, the youngest son of Christophe Dufros, the Sieur de la Jémeraye, and Marie-Renee Gaultier, the eldest sister of La Vérendrye. The nephew Christophe, <sup>best known as</sup> the Sieur de la Jémeraye, was in the west among the Sioux, Fox, and Winnebago as early as 1727, about the time of his uncle's first western venture.<sup>10</sup>

Some time after 1727 Le Jémeraye joined La Vérendrye, and upon his departure for the west in 1731 La Vérendrye took his nephew with him. Later in the year La Jémeraye was sent to establish Port St. Pierre on Rainy Lake,

the first of a chain of new posts built under La Vérendrye's direction. The nephew carried out still other orders with skill, and he must have been sorely missed after his early death, from disease or exposure, in 1736. La Jémeraye seems to have had more than ordinary ability, and probably more than ordinary training, since he prepared at least one well-drawn map of this part of the new regions, the original of which is still preserved.

Such was the composition of the immediate group La Vérendrye had with him in the west. Three Jesuits also accompanied him for shorter periods of time. These were Father Charles-Michel Mesaiger (1690-1766), who was present at the establishment of Ft. St. Charles on Lake of the Woods in 1732, but who left <sup>the west</sup> the following year; Father Jean-Pierre Aulneau (1705-1736), who was to die a violent death on Lake of the Woods with Jean-Baptiste de La Vérendrye and a group of canoemen; and Father Claude Godefroy Coquart (1706-1765) who, recently arrived from France, in 1741 accompanied La Vérendrye as far as Michilimackinac. Later that year he apparently accompanied Pierre, the son, to Lake Manitoba.<sup>11</sup>

It is unfortunate that, except for a group of valuable personal letters of Father Aulneau, little has come down to us from the hands of these clerics.<sup>12</sup>

The Jesuits were frequently able writers, and much that these priests recorded has probably been lost - material that would be of great value in tracing the accomplishments of La Vérendrye and his group. Something of this kind may have escaped the destruction of the archives of the Order at Paris during its suppression, and more may be found when its archives in Rome become available to scholars. If this should prove to be the case, historians can look forward to fresh materials on subjects to which the Jesuits contributed so much - geographical knowledge, manners and customs of the Indians, and like matters. Such additions to knowledge for the upper Missouri region for this period, and upon which Coquart must have informed himself, would be particularly welcome, since other sources for the explorations of the La Vérendryes are tantalizingly brief.

Pierre Gaultier, the Sieur de la Vérendrye, was appointed commandant of the Posts of the North in 1727. At this time these posts consisted only of Kamanistikwia and Nipigon, with an outpost at Michipicoten. These three posts had been previously occupied by Du Lhut and others, and from them the French had attempted to wrest the trade from the English in the valleys of the Moose and Albany rivers, and in the Rainy Lake-Lake Winnipeg region to the

west. Members of the Hudson's Bay Company became aware of the new pressure almost immediately. In 1728, its governor at Fort Albany asserted that the French - with the Assiniboin - yearly made war on most of the natives that frequented his post. He went on to add that the French had a settlement a mere four days' paddling from Lake Winnipeg - probably evidence of the activities of nameless outrunners from La Vérendrye's post at Kamanistikwia.<sup>13</sup>

There is ample evidence that the French were quite familiar with the route to Lake Winnipeg well before the 1730s, and that they understood the relationship to Hudson Bay of this body of water. Pioneers had of course reached in this direction from the St. Lawrence at least forty years earlier. The profits of the trade in this quarter were considerable: one report asserted that the returns from the Posts of the North exceeded thirty thousand livres (perhaps six thousand dollars); that the officers there were concerned only with their own interests; and that, by rights, the profits of the trade should be reserved for the royal treasury.<sup>14</sup> This report was scarcely an unbiased one, and its author was probably envious of the success of such persons as La Vérendrye, and was transmitting to the ministry of colonies what it



would certainly be pleased to hear. This report doubtless did La Vérendrye harm, and confirmed Comte de Maurepas, the minister, in his opinion that this colonial officer "was nothing more than a fur-trader seeking to amass a fortune."<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the intent of such reports, or their effects at court - and this was but one of many that seem to have reached it intended to discredit or reflect upon <sup>the motives of</sup> La Vérendrye - there is no evidence that the new governor, Beauharnois, was then or later influenced by them. Quite the opposite, for on May 19, 1731, La Vérendrye and a group of merchants contracted at Montreal to trade at the post of Ouinipigon, and their agreement was approved by the governor in the name of the King.<sup>16</sup> The region in which they were to trade, only vaguely defined in the minds of all concerned, was probably intended to include all of the vast area of the rivers draining to the west, at least as far as Lake Winnipeg. The contract is therefore a token of the esteem in which La Vérendrye was held in New France at this time by both merchants and officials. Almost at once, La Vérendrye, La Jémeraye, and La Vérendrye's three eldest sons left for the west.

La Vérendrye had been in charge of the Posts of the North for only a short time before he became aware of the

desirability of pushing westward beyond the familiar regions adjoining Lake Superior. It is quite probable that he was in fact made responsible for this matter in taking command of the region, but of this there seems to be no documentary evidence. By 1728, in any event, we know that he was informing himself on the matter. In this year Father Nicholas Gonor, returning from Ft. Beauharnois, met La Vérendrye at Michilimackinac, and there they discussed the matter of such exploration. Soon after, the priest wrote the governor, giving a summary of La Vérendrye's opinions on the problem.<sup>17</sup>

La Vérendrye's information was soon to be put before the governor personally, for he had gathered such information as he could concerning the west from the natives who frequented his post at Kamanistikwia. La Vérendrye submitted his report, probably compiled in 1729, the following year. A record of many talks with natives is preserved in this document, and from it we have the first new bits of knowledge of the geography of the more distant west and of the peoples with whom La Vérendrye was to be so closely associated in the years to come.

The best informants were apparently the Cree of the region around Kamanistikwia. The extent of their travels, or of their claims of travel, are truly surprising, but

there can be no doubt that they ranged great distances from their homes, following the border lakes as well as moving in other directions. Pako, a chief in the Lake Nipigon region, and Le Foye (the Faithful One) and Petit Jour (Daybreak), his brother, said they had been west beyond a height of land, of which La Vérendrye was unaware, and had reached a great river flowing toward the setting sun — possibly the Winnipeg River. Their description of the country, its animals and native peoples, and their statements provided the background for La Vérendrye's first real explorations. These peoples, they said, were very numerous and always wandering about, "never staying in any fixed place, but carrying their dwellings [cabannes] with them continually, from one place to another, and always camping together to form a village." These were the Assiniboin, long known to traders beyond Lake Superior.

But the Cree of Kamanistikwia were also aware of more distant peoples, in part at least from actual travel to the west. Their statements, preserved by La Vérendrye, are the earliest known reports of contacts from this quarter with peoples living along the Missouri valley, for little was known of these peoples from actual journeys to the Missouri itself. Much of what the commandant of the Posts

of the North was told of these distant tribes he was later to verify in person.

About three hundred leagues - nearly nine hundred miles - beyond the nomadic Assiniboin, the Cree asserted, were nations of a different character who lived in sedentary villages, raised crops, and "for lack of wood" made themselves huts of earth (cahutes de terre). As early as 1729, then, La Vérendrye had been reliably informed of the Missouri valley Indian groups, whose culture stood in sharp contrast to that of their nomadic neighbors to the north and east. His later personal visit to the homeland of these groups was thus but the culmination of an acquaintance of at least a decade. In fact, La Vérendrye and his sons actually met a few individuals from the Missouri valley villages before exploring in their direction, so were themselves aware of their different customs. Although the village tribes of the Missouri River had, beyond doubt, traded with the English or with their middlemen before La Vérendrye's visit, almost nothing was known of them before his visit.

Other statements were made by the Cree of a river whose waters seemed as red as vermilion - surely the Red River of the North, which was to figure in La Vérendrye's explorations. They spoke also of less credible wonders, such as a small

mountain, whose stones sparkled "night and day," and called "The Dwelling of the Spirit," which no one ventured to approach. He was also told of a very fine gold-colored sand along the river of the "red waters." These tales were, of course, properly folklore, and have a certain authenticity as such. There are numerous hills to which the tales may have referred, which in native lore were the dwelling places of sacred beings. But the gold-colored sand - did the explorer hear aright, or did he imagine that in this region was some of the fabulous wealth that seems to attach itself to tales of distant lands?

In more credible realms, the Cree asserted that the Indians of the interior (<sup>les</sup> Sauvages des terres) had some knowledge of a river that flowed to the west. Some spoke of it from having seen it themselves, and others only from having been told of it, but all obligingly agreed in what they said of it. As proof of their reports, La Vérendrye recorded that in the fall of 1728, certain Cree had visited Kamanistikwia <sup>accompanied by</sup> ~~with~~ individuals from those distant lands, permitting La Vérendrye to actually meet members of the village tribes of the Missouri River far from their homes.

One such individual was a <sup>male</sup> ~~a~~ slave mentioned in his account. This Indian, taken prisoner by the Assiniboin,

had been given to a Cree chief. He had been captured along the "River of the West," and himself gave additional details of the strange new peoples of those regions. The villages there were very numerous, he claimed, many of them being as much as two leagues long, and the country back from the river was inhabited, as well as that fronting the river. The peoples there, he said, raised quantities of grain, fruits abounded, and game was plentiful. The inhabitants of these villages did not know what a canoe was and, since there was no wood in all this vast region, they used the dried dung of animals for fuel. In these statements we can see that authentic descriptive details of the Missouri River villagers were reaching La Vérendrye, mingled as they were with some statements difficult to understand, as well as some that need not be believed at all — such as that there was on the bank of the river a nation of dwarfs no more than three feet or so in height. Such lore of dwarfs in the Missouri basin was recorded also by later explorers, among them Lewis and Clark.

La Vérendrye's report <sup>of 1730</sup> also contained such information as he could obtain concerning the actual routes by which one might reach the River of the West. Several crude maps were also made for him by Indians. Some asserted that White people lived at the mouth of the great western river,

though they could not tell to what nation they belonged, for the length of the journey was such that none had ventured to make the trip. In order to do so, they said, it would be necessary to leave the Lake of the Woods in March, and not hope to return before November. Such reports, La Vérendrye knew, were founded only on hearsay. Since the Cree could supply all their wants by trading with the English, only twenty days' travel distant, what would they be likely to seek on the Western Sea? The Cree, he knew, were actually trading on Hudson Bay, and he remarked to Beauharnois: "The English have every interest in getting ahead of us, and if we allow them they will not lose the chance of doing it. Besides, the colony will receive a new benefit [from explorations to the west] independent of the discovery of the Western Sea, through the quantity of furs that will be produced and which go to waste among the Sioux and Assiniboin, or by way of the Cree go to the English."<sup>19</sup> La Vérendrye foresaw that no exploration could be accomplished apart from the trade, and agreed with others in New France that the good of the colony would best be served by trade, whereas a search for a Sea of the West might be of little practical advantage.

Some days after receiving La Vérendrye's memoir, the governor forwarded it to the minister of colonies, together

with a map prepared by a skilled engineer and draftsman of his circle at Quebec, the Sieur Chaussegros de Lery. This map was a compilation of the new information provided by native maps, together with information gathered by La Vérendrye, but reduced to a uniform scale and adjusted to one of the official maps of the royal geographer, Guillaume Delisle. The governor and his assistant agreed that the River of the West must flow into the Pacific Ocean, its mouth said to have been discovered the preceding century by the Spaniard, Martin Aguilar. They also noted that there were two major rivers arising near the center of New France. One, flowing east, was of course the St. Lawrence; the other, flowing south, was the Mississippi. This arrangement, they argued, left a large territory to the west - in the region of the River of the West, of which much was now being heard. What is probably the original of the map prepared by de Lery has been preserved. Beauharnois' description of it, mentioning an attached sheet or slip of paper, leaves little doubt that in this case we have a particular map referred to in the documents of the period - something frequently difficult, if not impossible, to determine.<sup>20</sup>

Beauharnois and Giles Hocquart, the intendant, could readily see the logic of La Vérendrye's desire to extend



the trade of the colony, and his eagerness to enhance the prestige of New France through explorations, and did not hesitate to commend him to Maurepas. But the minister had his doubts, and submitted the various papers to Charlevoix for review. The Jesuit surely sensed the mood of the minister, for he remarked that the proposed exploration "might degenerate into a mere business of fur trading," whereas the discovery of the Sea of the West was a matter "which should be carried through continuously without a stop." At the same time, he observed, "After all, it is possible that the Western Sea is so distant and the road thither so impracticable, that the discovery would be of no use to us." Aware, however, of the minister's interest in exploration, he shrewdly added, "On the other hand, it may also be comparatively near and easy to reach, and we have rivals whom we ought to anticipate; and then, besides, in our search for it that may happen ... that in searching for what we are not destined to find, we may find what we were not looking for and what would be quite as advantageous to us as the object of our search."<sup>21</sup> Surely every benefit could not be lost, whatever of Charlevoix' counsel was to prevail!

Beauharnois had hoped that La Vérendrye's plea for expenses for exploration would be approved by the King. But it was the decision of the court that La Vérendrye

should make these efforts at his own expense. The colonials were of course acting in their own best interests: for them the search for a Western Sea would "expand the colony and rehabilitate the fur trade, which was, as it were, its life-blood. They aimed at the occupation of the west to this end, and only envisioned exploration as to be carried out at some convenient time and at the King's expense."<sup>22</sup> But La Vérendrye was already on his way to the west when the decision was rendered, unaware of the major change in his plans, and intent on building posts as far as Lake Winnipeg. In doing so he doubtless felt a certain patriotism, for he would be, he wrote, "carrying the King's arms far afield, enlarging the colony, and extending its commerce."<sup>23</sup>

The rightful claim of the La Vérendryes to the title "explorers" may be said to date from 1731 when, having contracted with certain merchants to supply the necessary goods for trading, La Vérendrye, La Jémeraye, and three of his sons departed for the west with the approval of the governor, and acting for the King. Now they first entered upon the border-lakes route to the west, through which the present international boundary winds its way.

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From Grand Portage, which they reached in August 1731, having been joined at Michilimackinac by Father Mesaiger, La Vérendrye was himself ultimately to reach the distant Missouri, and his sons still more distant parts of its vast basin. But several years were to pass before these things were accomplished, and it is not the least remarkable feature of the group that the objectives of exploration should have been kept so long and so steadily before them. Indeed, long after they had lost favor at Versailles, and even at Quebec, the sons were yet to offer themselves for further exploration, in even the most humble capacity, still willing to complete the assignment that had been sought by their father.

La Vérendrye's <sup>bold</sup> plan of a chain of posts to Lake Winnipeg was soon to be realized. In the fall of 1731, La Jémeraye and one son built on Rainy Lake the first of these, Fort St. Pierre. La Vérendrye had remained at Kamanistikwia during that winter, but the following June he and his party proceeded to the new post and beyond, to Lake of the Woods, where he was present during the construction of the second of his new posts, Fort St. Charles. This fort was to become his new headquarters, taking the place of that at Kamanistikwia. Descriptions of both posts - dimensions, arrangement, and appearance -

have been preserved, and the precise location of each is known.<sup>24</sup>

Again La J meraye was to act as his uncle's messenger to Quebec. In 1733 La V rendrye sent him east to report in person on the western command. <sup>Accompanied by MESAIGER, and</sup> with the commandant's letters for the governor, La J meraye carried still another new map. From an extract of one of his letters, forwarded to France, we see that La V rendrye still hoped that the expenses of exploration could be met from some source other than his own pocket.<sup>25</sup> But the minister sorely disappointed La V rendrye, for his persistent suspicion is the most noteworthy feature of his <sup>attention in</sup> ~~regard to~~ these matters.

We have information from documents carried to Quebec by La J meraye that La V rendrye had been actively seeking further information on the western country. One of these documents, though a troublesome one historically, is of special importance. This is a "Map of a part of Lake Superior" (which actually shows a great deal more than the immediate region of that lake). This map, now in Paris, may be the original carried down by La J meraye, forwarded <sup>there</sup> by Beauharnois with other papers.<sup>26</sup>

A note on his own tracing of this map by the archivist Margry - an expert witness - identifies a note on the

original map as in the handwriting of Jacques N. Bellin - a second expert witness. This earlier note is of special interest since it reads dressee par m<sup>r</sup> de la Jemeray ( prepared by M. La J meraye ), and it preserves evidence of the increased knowledge of the west now in the hands of the explorers.

This new map makes it clear that La V rendrye no longer believed, as he had in 1730, that the "River of the West" flowed out of Lake Winnipeg.<sup>27</sup> On this new map Lake Winnipeg is shown correctly as emptying into Hudson Bay. The River of the West, now a separate item, was to be reached overland from the Assiniboine River. Access to it is suggested by way of a Chemin des guerriers (Road of the Warriors). Another legend preserves evidence of the inquiries that La V rendrye had been conducting about the peoples living on the River of the West, and provides one of their names, apparently for the first time: Pais des Iskou a Chipouanes (Country of the Iskou a Chipouanes). It is therefore certain that by 1733 the explorers had been told that the River of the West made a great bend near the villages of these people.

Beauharnois, having consulted with La J meraye, and probably also with Mesaiger, and fully aware that exploration was now La V rendrye's primary responsibility, planned the campaign for 1733-1734 in "terms calculated

to placate the Minister."<sup>28</sup> La Jémeraye was to start as soon as the ice melted for Lake of the Woods, where he might expect to arrive in August; in September he would set out once more, to winter one hundred and fifty leagues further on. The following spring, in 1736, he was to go to the country of the Ouachipouennes, otherwise called "The Sioux who go Underground."<sup>29</sup>

Beauharnois' letter contains further information on these new peoples, obtained from interviews with La Jémeraye. They lived on the River of the West some three hundred leagues from Lake of the Woods, according to Cree who had visited the region on war parties. The Cree stated that the Ouachipouennes had eight villages, with fields of Indian corn, melons, pumpkins, and beans; that they had horses and even cats; and that their dwellings were of wood and earth (cabannes de bois et de terre), built like those of the French. The Cree had of course seen the log buildings erected by La Vérendrye, adapted to materials at hand in the lake region, and the Cree comments on their similarity have some validity. That the <sup>new</sup> reports were more restrained than those first obtained may be inferred from the governor's remark that the new people were "of the same height as other Indians," and the observation that some of these people had light hair, some red, and

some black is not too much to believe. That the Cree had heard an alien tongue in the west is witnessed by their statement that these people spoke a language that had some resemblance to French, but was quite unlike English. Such a statement was, of course, not so much factual as it was undoubtedly intended to interest the French.

Other Cree observations of these people record numerous <sup>cultural</sup> differences between themselves and these "Sioux who go Underground." The latter dressed in buffalo skins, used earthen pots, and had a few large axes, badly worn through use. The Cree said that these people never themselves made war on other tribes, but were always on their guard, and defended themselves bravely when attacked. The Cree frankly admitted that they and the Assiniboin constantly made war on them, and had even captured several of their children. Beauharnois wrote that Le Jémeraye had brought three of these children with him to Montreal. When these children saw cats and horses in Montreal, they said that they had animals of the same kind at home.

The Cree and the Assiniboin claimed, before La Jémeraye, that they had made peace with the Ouachipounnes, and promised that they would guide him and La Vérendrye's son to their country, where they could obtain further information on how to reach the Western Sea, into which, it seemed, the great River of the West discharged. As a

footnote to the information obtained, La Jémeraye said that he had spoken to about twenty Cree, individually in private and at different times, to see whether their accounts would agree, and that they had always told him the same thing. The only disagreement, he said, was with respect to certain animals the Indians had seen in their travels. The traders were obviously losing no opportunities to gather information that would be of assistance to them. If the court grew impatient, it was because it did not and could not appreciate the problems involved.

A number of documents dating after May, 1733, in journal form, are available - doubtless based on actual field journals now lost. These documents, preserved in drafts forwarded to Paris, show that La Vérendrye continued to gather information on the west. In January, 1734, he heard again of the new tribes living on the River of the West, from other native sources. These data, although obtained second-hand, were however frequently corroborated by later personal observations by La Vérendrye and his successors. When, some five years later, he at last visited the upper Missouri in person, he could not have been too surprised at what he saw there.

From a <sup>new</sup> memoir bearing the commandant's signature, we learn that a council was held with the Indians late in



December, 1733, at Ft. St. Charles.<sup>30</sup> A number of Cree and Monsoni chiefs were at this council - members of tribes which La Vérendrye had previously interviewed. Four Assiniboin chiefs were also in attendance. Because of their familiarity with the west, La Vérendrye found them to be good informants. Although he does not mention the fact, La Vérendrye must have been aware that the Assiniboin were especially well-qualified sources, since they - like some of the people living along the Missouri River - spoke a Siouan language.

This council continued through the first few days of the new year, the commandant providing corn and fish for the all-important feast, remarking that "without the help of the pot you cannot have friendship." After the feast, and after having given gifts to the Indians, La Vérendrye began his inquiries once more.

The Assiniboin told him that as soon as spring came they would leave to visit the Achipoüanes to buy corn, as they had agreed to do. When in turn the Assiniboin were asked what they thought of the tribes along the River of the West, and whether they were Indians like themselves, the Assiniboin - like the Cree - replied that they took them for Frenchmen. Perhaps the Assiniboin wished to convey the impression of the strangeness they gained on visiting the westerners: since these people were unlike themselves

or the Cree, they must be French! They were described as Caserniers ("Barrack-dwellers," or "Pueblos," for inhabitants of Southwestern pueblos).

The Assiniboin said that the houses and forts of the westerners were much like those of the French, except that the roofs of their houses were flat and covered with earth and stone. The <sup>ir</sup> forts were made of double rows of stakes leurs (forts de pieux et bien doubles), and had two bastions, at <sup>^</sup> opposite corners. The houses were large, they said, and had caches or storage pits (des caves), in which corn was kept in large baskets. The inhabitants, they asserted, never left the forts (that is, probably, to live elsewhere), and everyone, both men and women, worked in the fields, except for the chief.

These "barrack-dwellers" were tall, well proportioned, white (blanca), and walked with their toes turned out. Their hair was sometimes light in color, both chestnut and red, as well as black. The men had beards which they cut or pulled out, though some allowed the beard to grow. These people were engaging and affable with strangers who came to visit them, though they remained on their guard. They did not visit neighboring tribes. They were clothed in hides or in dressed skins which were carefully worked and of different colors. They had a kind of shirt (Camisolle)

with breeches and leggings of the same material, and their shoes seemed to be of one piece with the leggings. Women dressed in long garments, a kind of tunic reaching to the ankles, with a girdle having an apron (Tablier), the entire garment of a finely worked hide, and they wore their hair in tresses coiled on the head.

To the Assiniboin, this tribe seemed to be very industrious. They sowed quantities of corn, beans, peas, oats and other grains,<sup>31</sup> which they traded with neighboring tribes who visited their villages for the purpose. The women did not work as hard as other Indian women, the Assiniboin thought, but occupied themselves with domestic affairs and with keeping things neat and clean. When work was pressing they helped in the fields.<sup>32</sup>

These Achipoüanes raised several different kinds of domestic animals, such as horses and goats, and had domestic fowl including turkeys, hens, geese, ducks, and other varieties with which the Assiniboin were not acquainted.<sup>33</sup> Their customary food was Indian corn, but they also ate a great deal of the flesh of buffalo, moose, deer, and the like, which they trapped in great pits covered with twigs and leaves. They hunted on horseback, going out together to do so in groups.<sup>34</sup>

La Vérendrye was told that the smallest forts of these people were square, and measured five or six arpents on a side -- approximately nine hundred or a thousand feet. They were surrounded by a good ditch and had a stout gate (porte doublé). In the middle of each fort was a large space upon which all the dwellings faced. All of the forts were on the banks of a stream, and a subterranean passage led from the middle of this open place to the edge of the water; thus the inhabitants could reach the water and even embark without being seen.<sup>35</sup> Their weapons, both offensive and defensive, were bow and arrow, shield, axe, and dart, the last of which was a kind of lance.

The house of the chief of each settlement, La Vérendrye heard, was very large and higher than the rest, and occupied the whole side opposite the gate. Within it, and at one end, were the chief's quarters and those of his servants and slaves; the central part was for public assemblies and the reception of strangers; the opposite end was assigned to his wives. This house had three principal entrances. ~~Before the chief's dwelling~~ Before the chief's dwelling was a pole with what he understood to <sup>be a</sup> weathervane<sup>\*</sup> (girouëtte) on the top, while at the two ends of the house and raised above it were

two buffalo skulls (Têtes de boeuf) with ornamental carvings, which La Vérendrye took to be the coats of arms of the tribe.<sup>36</sup>

These Achipoüanes had but one great chief, he heard, under whom were a large number of separate forts, built on both banks of the great river. His informants knew of nine such forts, separated from each other by a league or less, but they had heard that there were a great many others, both upstream and below that in which the principal chief lived. Each fort had its own chief, but all were subject to the first. When there was an alarm, the inhabitants could warn each other, from bank to bank, by means of a trumpet and in this way the entire nation could be put on the alert in a few hours, and they doubtless had other means of signaling.<sup>37</sup>

The Assiniboin were particularly struck by the watercraft of these people, who had small boats made of hides. Rounded at the ends, they were propelled by one man using a double-bladed paddle or two small oars. Of the great river itself, they had seen that it was eighteen or twenty arpents wide, very deep, abounding in fish, and having a good current. They were not aware of any falls or rapids in its course. "It waters a vast mountainless country," La Vérendrye understood, "partly bare and in

prairie, and partly in wood of a high growth, oak and other kinds of wood as in Canada."

Probably wondering how the Assiniboin could have learned so much of these westerners and of their country, La Vérendrye asked whether they understood the language. One Assiniboin told him that he had depended on an interpreter and had not stayed there long enough to remember any words of the language, but he insisted that they spoke and sang like the French. For some reason, the Assiniboin did not disclose the fact that they were describing peoples, some of whom spoke Siouan dialects like themselves.

Inquiries about the lower parts of the great river brought the answer that although the Achipouanes had been asked about this, they knew of no other tribe than their own. La Vérendrye the trader then asked about the tools these people used for cutting wood, and heard that they had no iron like that of the French. The Assiniboin were the only ones who traded with them - a few axes and knives for corn - which they liked better than their own because they cut so much better. It was asserted that the axes which these people did have (and which they made themselves) were yellow, and harder than copper. Their knives, made of the same material, were well made, and fitted with deer

antler handles. La Vérendrye must have thought of precious metals, but the Assiniboin were probably alluding only to brass or various flints used in the west since prehistoric times, since they said that their lances and arrowpoints were also made of this same "metal." For kettles these strangers used pots of clay or earth (pots de grais [glaise] ou de Terre), decorated on the outside, and glazed on the inside.

Seeking still more information, La Vérendrye asked whether the Achipouanes knew anything of the French. Some of the Assiniboin replied that they had been among them only four moons ago, and had spoken to them about the French. This had pleased the Achipouanes, and their great chief had asked the Assiniboin to tell the French chief that it would give them great pleasure to see the French and make friends with them. "If he comes himself, or if he sends one of his men," the chief was quoted as saying, "I beg him to let me know beforehand, in order that I may send to meet him as he deserves." Whether or not La Vérendrye was correctly appraised of the sentiments of the Achipouanes, the western villagers had, through native channels, received due notice of the impending arrival of the French.

It is not necessary to examine in detail the assertions of the Assiniboin informants at Ft. St. Charles in 1734, in their detailed description of the people they called

"The Sioux who go Underground." There are unquestionably ← errors and misunderstandings in the account, but it is nevertheless a remarkably accurate description of the village peoples of the upper Missouri. The account seems to have been neglected by previous students of the La Vérendryes, though it clearly reveals the breadth of the knowledge he had of these peoples well before he set foot on their own lands. He did not repeat similar observations in later documents, such as the one giving an account of the journey of 1738-1739.

Though he must have felt the urgency of making contacts with the new peoples at the earliest opportunity, La Vérendrye announced, at the council of January 1734, that he would be unable to visit the Achipoüanes in less than a year's time. He himself had been away from home for more than three years. Most of his men, furthermore, were about to leave for Montreal for supplies. Although he had received supplies from home each fall, he was probably too poorly equipped at the time to make the push to the west at once.

The story of the La Vérendryes now takes a different turn, in large part because of the tragic character of the events that were now to befall. It is an oft-told story.<sup>38</sup> The ancient strife between the Sioux and other



Indians of the region, especially with the Cree and Monsoni in the border lakes region, was bound sooner or later to involve the French directly. Distant native groups - defeated or exploited by those nearer at hand who were being supplied with White men's goods - could only regard the French as enemies, and would eventually find ways to break the encirclement by striking back at them.<sup>39</sup> The clash was inevitable, and La Vérendrye was to suffer directly and personally at the hands of the Sioux.

Late in the winter, La Vérendrye paid a brief visit to Ft. St. Pierre to try to prevent the Monsoni from going to war against the Sioux. That spring, <sup>however,</sup> the Cree joined their relatives in the decision to take the warpath, and asked that his eldest son, Jean-Baptiste, accompany them. At this time it is impossible to penetrate the motives of all concerned, but it is not unlikely that Jean-Baptiste himself wished to go on such a foray. Consent was given by his father, perhaps reluctantly, but La Vérendrye offered as justification the fact that, had he withheld his consent, the Indians would have taken the French for cowards. As Morton has shown, from the Albany Fort Journal of the Hudson's Bay Company, it is likely that several French had been killed by the Sioux as early as 1734.<sup>40</sup> The commandant may have felt that the Sioux should now be chastened.

If this was the case, however, the course proved disastrous. Quite aside from the loss of life, explorations were further delayed, and trade must have been severely curtailed.

Leaving his son Pierre in charge at Ft. St. Charles, La Vérendrye now left for Montreal. Meeting the Sieur Cartier, one of his merchant partners at Kamanistikwia, he sent him on to establish a post on the Red River. When he reached Michilimackinac he met La Jémeraye, returning from the east, and also sent him on with orders to relieve Pierre at Ft. St. Charles, so that Pierre might help build the new post on the Red River, to be called Fort Maurepas. This post - the first of two of the name - was a few miles south of the mouth of the Red River, on a small tributary called Nettley Creek.<sup>41</sup>

La Vérendrye probably returned to the settlements because of the expiration of his contract, as well as to refit. But for him to return, having gone no further than Lake of the Woods, must have proven embarrassing to the governor, aware of the eagerness of the court for news of the River of the West, and of the Western Sea. Beauharnois once more pleaded for royal assistance, but to no avail.<sup>42</sup> The River of the West was still unexplored, though more than three years had elapsed since the task had been assigned. It was in fact said that the officials in New France were not really looking for the Western Sea,

but rather for "the sea of beaver."<sup>43</sup>

Beauharnois, in a much better position to understand the problems of the western command, did not fail La Vérendrye in his dispatches. "I venture to assure you," he wrote Maurepas, "that the zeal which he manifests for this enterprise cannot be suspected of any other motive than the well-being of the service and the colony, and that, up to the present, it has been a very costly thing for him."<sup>44</sup> Since the court, though finding fault with these efforts, had failed to suggest a practical means for explorations, the governor did as best he could to plan them himself. In order to free La Vérendrye from complete dependence on trade, he was <sup>now</sup> permitted to farm out his posts to various merchants for a three year period. This was done in the expectation that this subletting would afford sufficient funds to carry on the search.<sup>45</sup> The new scheme further complicated La Vérendrye's now-tangled finances, but it provided that he himself should not have to do any trading, either directly or indirectly; thus, he would be able to pursue his goal of reaching the Sea of the West "with all possible diligence."

The governor's plans for the next campaign were also made plain to the ministry. La Vérendrye reported that he now had a post on Lake Winnipeg—doubtless assuming that

his instructions were being carried out. This post was, he thought, only a hundred and fifty leagues from the village peoples on the River of the West. He was to depart in the spring (1735) for this new post, Ft. Maurepas, and to arrange to go the following spring to visit these westerners who, according to the Assiniboin, eagerly awaited the opportunity to make an alliance with the French. With him, La Vérendrye ~~was to~~ <sup>would</sup> take La Jémeraye and one of his sons - probably Jean-Baptiste - who had an aptitude for ~~learning~~ Indian languages. The son was to learn the language of the Ouatchipouennes, as the governor now spelled the troublesome name. By acting as an interpreter, the son could obtain information needed to carry on the explorations.<sup>46</sup> Still another aide was to be added to La Vérendrye's staff at this time. His youngest son, Louis-Joseph; now seventeen, who had thus far remained at home, was to be trained in mathematics and drawing during the winter before the new departure, so that he would be prepared to make an accurate map of the countries to be explored.<sup>47</sup>

With the coming of the spring of 1735, the father was once more ready to depart, and on June 6, together with his youngest son, he left for the west. With him was yet another new participant, also young and inexperienced in

the problems now so familiar to the commandant. This was Father Aulneau, whose brief career in New France was to end in less than a year. Aulneau's letters to his mother, Madame de la Touche Aulneau, and to his fellow clerics afford a further record of the Posts of the North.<sup>48</sup>

As he was about to depart, Aulneau wrote that he was being sent to carry the Gospel far into the unknown west, among Indians "whom not one of us has yet set eyes upon." The tribe, he wrote, had been given the name Quant Chipouanes - "those who dwell in holes" - and they had thus far remained unknown to the rest of men. In the best Jesuit tradition, he had been instructed to have frequent conversations with the people, by means of which he could learn their tongue and thereby compile dictionaries of their languages. This he was also to do for the languages of the Cree and the Assiniboin, since so little was known even of these tongues. But he was to remain only temporarily with these two tribes, who were so nomadic in their habits. By contrast, the Quant Chipouanes, if reports were true, lived in settled villages and there was, consequently, better promise of doing good among them. Yet Aulneau admitted that he looked forward to his mission with "fear and trembling", especially since he would be alone among the tribe, and far from spiritual assistance and support.<sup>49</sup>

It is clear from Aulneau's letters that the mission to the distant western tribe had been planned largely because of the settled habits of these people. The young priest had been well instructed in his duties, and was in possession of what the Order could learn of the west regarding both its geography and its native tribes. He had studied these matters carefully and, although he could not be certain, had concluded that the new people probably lived on the banks of the great Rio Colorado o del Norte, which his famous predecessor, Father Eusebio Kino, had shown on his map of California in 1705.<sup>50</sup>

Beauharnois had expected that La Vérendrye should go at least as far as Lake Winnipeg in 1735, and the following spring to the River of the West. But again plans went awry. The commandant reached Ft. St. Charles on September 6, 1735, and there he spent the winter. He later said that the expected supplies, through the bad management of the guides, did not reach him that fall at all, and did not arrive until the summer of 1736.<sup>51</sup> What he does not reveal, however, is the fact that Fort Maurepas had not as yet been built. In the fall of 1735 he had sent La Jémeraye and two of the sons, with two men, from Ft. St. Charles in this direction, probably to build the post that had been planned two years earlier. Whatever his reasons

for not pushing on, La Vérendrye was still on Lake of the Woods at the beginning of the season of 1736, nor was he to see the distant west for more than two years.

Now he began to receive tragic news. On June 2, his two sons returned with word that La Jémeraye, his chief assistant for so long, was dead. He had died May 10, at the forks of the Roseau (à la Fourche des Roseau) -- that is, probably, at the junction of the Roseau and the Red River. But the lonely death of the young assistant, of apparently natural causes, was but an omen of worse news to come. The supplies so badly needed had still not arrived from Montreal and, deciding not to wait for the convoy, La Vérendrye sent down Jean-Baptiste and a party to hasten it along. With them, returning to the settlements in the east, was Father Aulneau.<sup>52</sup> It has been said that Aulneau, in despair of succeeding with a mission to the nomads of the forest, had given up the task.<sup>53</sup> But his own letters show that his real objective had been the settled peoples of the great River of the West, and there is no hint of his having given up, or wishing to do so, in his letters.

Like many another detail, the reasons for Aulneau's return are forever buried in the past. Only the more lurid details of the massacre which was now to take place are known, reconstructed as they were in the months to follow, since

none of the principals escaped to give a personal account. And even the details reconstructed are conflicting, down to the number of people killed. The details are, however, not really important here: but the commandant and father sustained, as he said, "a blow from which he should never recover." In one stroke he had lost his eldest son, the young priest, and at least nineteen canoemen, probably at an island long since known as Massacre Island, in what are now Canadian waters of the international boundary. Such a disaster "might well have stayed the steps of the most eager explorer," as has been said by one student, who suggests that the attack on the returning French party was nothing less than the answer of the Sioux to the arming of their enemies, the forest tribes, and to Jean-Baptiste's having taken the warpath with them.<sup>54</sup>

Ironically enough, the long awaited supplies reached Ft. St. Charles only a few days after this tragedy, with the arrival of a party under one of the merchant partners, the *Sieur le Gras*. For a time, all thought of the search for a Western Sea, and probably even of trade, must have been forgotten. Indeed, it was fall once more before La Vérendrye seems to have regained his composure. Not until September was he able to return to the matter of exploration, or even to send to the lonely island for the bodies of his



son, the priest, and the men. When, however, this was accomplished, the remains were interred in the chapel at Ft. St. Charles where, long afterward, they were rediscovered and identified.<sup>55</sup>

Once more the sorely tried explorer took up his task. In September, he dispatched his son, the Chevalier, and six men to Ft. Maurepas at the request of the Cree and Assiniboin.<sup>56</sup> La Vérendrye had intended that his son go with Assiniboin guides to reconnoitre the country of the western villagers, and he provided the Chevalier, for the purpose, with a box of articles "such as might please these people," together with clothing, tobacco, axes, necklaces (or "wampum"), and even a French flag. The son was told to try to keep the Indians at peace and, among other things, to invite the western peoples to Ft. Maurepas to form an alliance. But the son was unable to complete the mission because of the lack of canoes. Further explanation of the failure of this attempt is lacking, but the turmoil of the summer had brought no little fear to the hearts of the French.

Meanwhile, the commandant continued his inquiries about the western country and its people. Those whom he had previously known as the Ouachipouanes <sup>(the Monsoni term for them)</sup> he now learned were also called the Kouathéattes by the Cree. La Vérendrye

now speaks of them as a race of men white in color, and civilized (policés); it is evident that he is receiving ~~varied~~ <sup>dubious</sup> information on them.

Once more the explorer asked that his informants prepare a map of the western country, which they did. This map he forwarded to his superior. "You will see," he wrote Beauharnois, "that I have not forgotten the mines, nor whatever could aid in my explorations - tribes, rivers, mountains, etc."<sup>57</sup> This map also has been preserved; its title reads "A map containing the new discoveries in the west of New France, <sup>(</sup> seas, rivers, lakes, and nations inhabiting it in the year 1737" (Carte contenant Les nouvelles découvertes de l'ouest En Canada, Mers, Rivieres, Lacs, et Nations qui y habittent en L'année 1737).<sup>58</sup>

Little attention is paid to scale, proportion or orientation on this map, and it is obviously from native sources.

When it was prepared La Vérendrye had not gone beyond Lake of the Woods.

La Vérendrye was now conscious of the fact that the great river of the Ouachipouanes - or of the Kouathéattes - did not, as he had thought, flow to the west. Rather, it flowed to the south, and finally discharged, apparently, in the Pacific Ocean. We may believe that Father Aulneau had discussed this matter with him, for La Vérendrye says

that he was told there were white men, towns, forts, and cannon on this river, and prayers were said there by "black robes" (Jesuits) who lived in the country. His remarks <sup>suggest that</sup> ~~sound as though~~ he and the priest had been poring over Kino's map of the Southwest and the lower Colorado River. When he saw that the distance to the western people was no more than some one hundred and fifty leagues, La Vérendrye at last decided to make the journey himself, believing that he would be able to attain his objective by spring. But for one reason or another he was unable to depart at once. He says that his men were afraid to accompany him, an assertion which is easily believed after the events earlier at Massacre Island, and <sup>it was</sup> an emotion <sup>^</sup> ~~which~~ he probably felt himself.

On the new map he sent down to Quebec with his memoir, La Vérendrye called the governor's attention to a "height of land" indicated as a "mountain chain," running from a point north of Lake Superior toward the unexplored new region. Also worthy of note was a certain Rivière Blanche (White River) — probably the Saskatchewan — which took its rise in these highlands.

Beyond this height of land, the Cree said, they had traveled as much as five days down the stream they called the River of the West. They had been surprised to find there

a region having a quite different climate, and with different fruits and trees with which they were not acquainted. Once again, some of their statements belong in the realm of folklore, but some of them seem credible. For example, one of the nomadic folk they mentioned were wanderers like the Assiniboin, and who were known as the Pikaraminiouach. The name of this group has proven to be indecipherable to students, but the description of their customs leaves no doubt of the authenticity of the Cree account, which relates to one of the numerous nomadic groups on the northern Plains.

The Pikaraminiouach were very numerous, lacked firearms, but had axes, knives, and cloth as did the Cree, which they obtained from the lower part of the great river, where White men dwelt in walled towns and forts. The distance from the height of land to the sea the Cree thought to be perhaps three hundred leagues, but they claimed to know no more about these — new people than they could learn from slaves they had captured beyond the height of land. Their description ends with the genuine note that the nomads in question carried their tents or dwellings with them as did the Assiniboin. It is possible that the Pikaraminiouach were the people designated on the accompanying map as the Hiatchiritiny. The latter word is said to mean "strangers

or slaves" in Cree. Since the term was commonly applied by the Cree to the Blackfoot, the map of 1737 may record the first French contacts (through the Cree) with that important Plains tribe.<sup>59</sup>

La Vérendrye remained at Ft. St. Charles throughout the winter, and early in 1737 proceeded, for the first time in person, to the new Ft. Maurepas on the Red River. Here, on March 5, he held another council with the Assiniboin and Cree. The Assiniboin again offered to guide him to the River of the West, which they visited each year, but La Vérendrye once more declined their offer. He says that he gave the lateness of the season as his reason for not making the trip -- "so as not to let them think Frenchmen were afraid" -- but added that he planned to return to Ft. St. Charles, which he did not mention at the council.<sup>60</sup> His farming leases would expire in 1738, and this was probably his chief reason for not pushing farther west that year, despite the specific instructions of his superior. The events of 1736 had caused more than a temporary delay.

During the council he had asked the Assiniboin where they planned to spend the summer, and was told that after raiding the Sioux they would go again to visit the Kouathéattes to trade for corn and beans, for which they would exchange the axes, firesteels, and other iron tools that these people

lacked. Making the most of the opportunity of this contact, La Vérendrye entrusted to the Assiniboin presents he had intended to give in person to the Kouathéattes. The Assiniboin promised to convey these gifts to them, together with a message in the name of the governor. This message was to the effect that the French wished to establish friendly relations with the Kouathéattes and to enter into direct trade with them. La Vérendrye went on to invite them to come in the fall to the junction of the Red with the Assiniboin River, where he planned to build, so as to be nearer them. He also wished them to come with horses, bringing with them corn, beans, and some of the metal they used, "particularly that which is the color of the sun," as well as some of the stones that shone in the dark (luisent la nuit), and other curiosities of which he had been told.

Though primarily concerned about the trade, La Vérendrye had no intention of overlooking other sources of information. Such things as should arrive in this way in the fall at Ft. Maurepas, with the return of the Assiniboin from their summer hunt, were to be forwarded to him in the spring. He, in turn, would forward them in due time to the governor. La Vérendrye had laid his plans for trade well in advance; though he himself was soon to return to Quebec, he was planning for future campaigns.

When in the fall of 1738 La Vérendrye returned to Montreal and Quebec, he must have been more than a little embarrassed at having to report that he had not yet visited the River of the West, which had now been his <sup>goal</sup> ~~objective~~ for more than six years. It was quite true that he had taken several <sup>long</sup> steps in that direction - at a cost that he alone could realize - and had accomplished much of the groundwork. He could point to the opening of the region from Kamanistikwia to the Red River, and the establishment of three important new posts in that direction. No ministry could ever understand the effort necessary to accomplish these things. La Vérendrye may perhaps have felt that the task was too discouraging, too impossible to achieve, and he seems to have wanted to abandon it. In writing directly to Maurepas, he reports that he had for a time abandoned the explorations, and asked to be given command of a company of troops at home.<sup>61</sup>

But Beauharnois had no thought of any such change; with unfailing constancy he supported La Vérendrye, and sending, as before, the supporting evidence of his officer's papers and his new map. That Beauharnois, at least, had no notion of abandoning the search in the west is clear from his remarks that La Vérendrye had promised him that on his return to the west, in 1738, he would somehow get

to the country of the Ouachipouanes, or Kouathéattes, and that a report would be in Beauharnois' hands no later than September, 1739. Sympathetic though he was, the governor warned La Vérendrye, however, that "if he did not keep his word to me, I would call him back."<sup>62</sup>

The persistent minimizing of the accomplishments of the western command by the colonial ministry must have been most galling, to governor and commandant alike. Failing to take due account of the character of the Indians, of the distances involved in the explorations, and of the sheer physical endurance and effort required - to say nothing of the unreasonable requirement that the explorers accomplish the King's pleasure at his own risk and expense - La Vérendrye's contemporaries, except for a few of his superiors at Quebec, seem to have ignored the quite remarkable achievements of his six years in the west. History sheds a somewhat different light on the matter: the stage had been set for truly distant journeys. For the first time, groups of White men were to visit the drainage of the upper Missouri River, hitherto unexplored from this or any other quarter. The departure of La Vérendrye and his inexperienced group from Kamanistikwia in 1731 toward the border lakes country had been a first step toward this distant goal. Now, a tried and wiser group took a strange new trail in



the autumn of 1738, for the first time in their experience  
overland on foot, rather than in their trusted canoes.

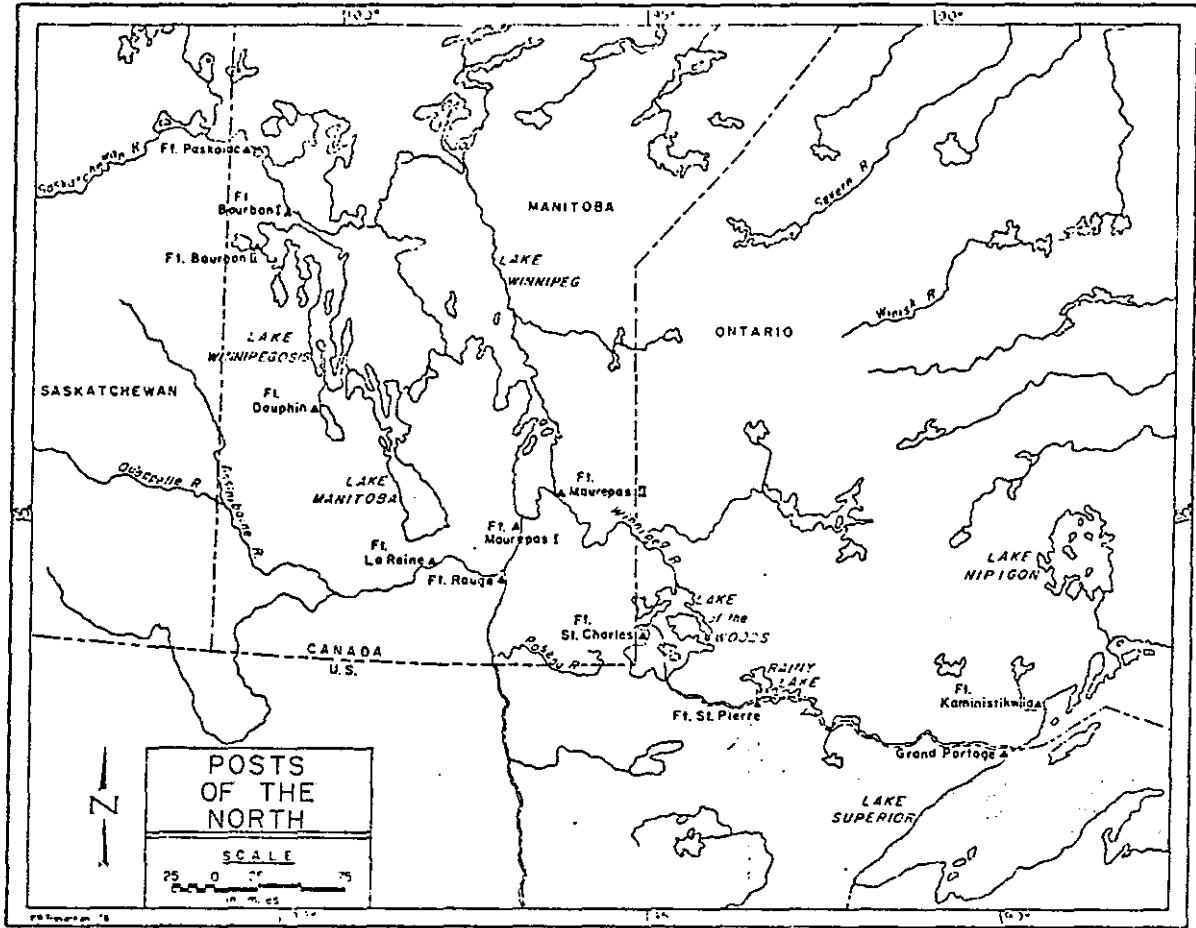


Figure 1. La Verendryes' Posts of the North, in western New France.

3

## EXPLORATIONS OF 1738-1739 TO THE MISSOURI RIVER

Our knowledge of the activities of the La Vérendryes during the latter part of 1738 and early 1739 is based on a document preserved in the Public Archives of Canada. This manuscript appears to have come to the Public Archives of Canada from private sources, apparently from one Judge Badgely, who may have had the original through family descent. The text is not duplicated in official or private archives in France or elsewhere, though it must at one time have been copied for officialdom at Paris. Part of this manuscript is presented below in English. This translation is not a complete one, but an abridgement, but it contains in full all of those parts bearing directly on the explorations southwest from Ft. La Reine. For reference, page numbers (in brackets) are supplied for the unpagged original. The part of the journal given here covers pages [3] to [20] of the twenty-two pages of the original; other parts are summarized in brackets.

This version has been prepared from the original manuscript and from photostats of the original. Three previous translations have been carefully studied.<sup>1</sup> The

text is literally rendered, with a conscious effort to avoid interpolating ideas not clearly borne out by the text. The almost unbroken original narrative is divided into paragraphs, as has been done by two of the three previous translators.

\* \* \* \* \*

Journal, in letter-form, from July 20, 1738, the date of my departure from Michilimackinac, to May, 1739; sent to the M. the Marquis de Beauharnois, Commander of the Military Order of St. Louis, Governor and Lieutenant General of the whole of New France, lands and country of Louisiana, by his most humble servant La Verendrye, lieutenant of a company of the detachment of marine in Canada, commissioned by his orders for the discovery of the sea of the west.

[1-3. With a party of twenty-two men in six canoes, La Vérendrye arrived from Michilimackinac at the pais plats (the Flat Country, a district near Kamanistikwia), on August 1, 1738. Here a brief council was held with the Indians, most of whom had gone to war with the Sioux. Kamanistikwia was reached on the 5th, and here the governor's orders for this post and for Ft. St. Pierre were left for Charles Nolan, the Sieur de la Marque, a trade associate who was expected shortly. The party left for Rainy Lake on the 6th. On the 22nd, they met a small band of Monsoni near the "little straits" of the lake, and they had a brief council with them. Ft. St. Charles was reached on the 31st, and here, on September 3, another council was held with the Indians.]

Having my youngest son received as commandant in my absence, and publishing an order to that effect, I departed on my journey taking with me my other two sons. I delayed leaving until September 11 [1738], awaiting La Marque, of the trading company. I had earlier promised him that I would not hurry, thus giving him an opportunity to overtake me, and La Marque had promised, at Michilimackinac, to make all possible speed, in order to accompany me in the fall in the proposed discovery of the Mantannes. These people have heretofore been called Ouachipouanne by the Monsoni, and Couatchouatte by the Cree; Mantannes is the proper name of the nation.

Since La Marque had not yet arrived by the 10th of the month, and everything being in good order at the fort as well as for my departure, I left the next day, still hoping that La Marque would overtake me in time to make the journey with me. Arriving at Ft. Maurepas on the 22d, I held an inspection of arms, published your orders concerning the post, giving [a copy of them to] M. de Louvière, clerk for the trading company, and chose five men to go with me. As had been agreed, I left nine other men with de Louvière.

Reaching the forks of the Assiniboin River on the 24th, I found ten Cree families (cabannes) with two war chiefs, who were awaiting me with a large quantity of meat, having been notified of my coming. They begged me to remain with them for a while, to afford them the pleasure of seeing me and feasting us, and to this I consented, glad of an opportunity to talk to them.

[The council dealt with the attempt to prevent the Indians from trading with the English, with the feuds between the Cree and the Sioux, and with the death of Jean-Baptiste<sup>de</sup> La Vérendrye.]

A chief then asked where I planned to go. He said that the Assiniboin River was very low and that we would be running the risk of rendering our canoes quite useless. Furthermore, we would be among people who did not know how to take beaver, and clothed themselves only in buffalo hides (peaux de beuf), which were not in demand, [5] - a people lacking good sense, who had never seen Frenchmen and would be unable to understand us.

I replied that during the fall I wished to visit the nation of white men of whom so much had been heard, and that I would ascend the river as far as I could go, in hopes of accomplishing the journey ordered by you. I stated that I wished to increase the number of your

children, and to teach the Assiniboin how to hunt, — to teach them some sense; — another year I would go in some other direction.

The chief replied: "You are very likely, my father, to return with empty canoes. It is true that there are many Assiniboin, but they understand nothing of hunting beaver; I hope that you can teach them some sense."

[Encouraging the Cree to hunt diligently, to bring meat to the French post, and to keep their promises not to trade with the English, La Vérendrye again set out on September 26.]

I found the river very low, no rain having fallen during the summer. Its course is from the west, very winding and very broad, and having a swift current with many shallows; it is bordered with good timber along its banks and with prairies as far as the eye can reach, where they are many buffalo and deer. I decided to proceed by land, following the prairies, with the men I did not need following in canoes, and found the prairie route to be shorter, since it cut across several bends in the stream, and one was thus able to keep a straight course. There is game along the river in great abundance.

I had not marched very far before meeting a number of Assiniboin, who had been told that I was coming up



their river, and had come to meet me. Keeping on my way, however, I put off talking to them until I should come to their own country. The party thus kept increasing every day. For six days I marched on, making good use of the time.

On the evening of October 2d, the Indians warned me that I could ascend no farther, the river being too shallow to proceed in canoes. I was told that I had now reached the most favorable point on the river, both because of the abundant timber here, and for access to all peoples of the region, situated as it was on the portage leading to the Lake of the Prairies [Lake Manitoba]. Here was the trail used by the Assiniboin in going to the English.

"If you were here," they said, "you could stop everyone. You wished to go to the Mantannes; here is the beginning of the trail."

I deliberated over what we should do. We estimated that we were now about sixty leagues from the forks by water, and about thirty-five or forty by land, following the prairies. Everyone agreed that we could go no farther, and that to do so would be running the risk of rendering the canoes useless upon returning, and in a place lacking materials for refitting. Here there was

neither pitch nor roots for that purpose. It would be better to remain here, where there was plenty of material for building. Here was the trail that led to the English, and here there was reason to expect many Indians, certainly all those who did not go to Ft. Maurepas.

[6] I decided on the morning of the 3d to ch<sup>o</sup>se a suitable place at which to build a fort [Fort La Reine], and had it begun at once. I still hoped that La Marque would join me; if I were to go higher up the river La Marque would not be able to find me. While the building was being pushed, I held a council with the Assiniboin. Assembling them all near my tent, I made them a present, on your behalf, of powder, ball, tobacco, axes, knives, chisels, and awls — all highly prized by them since they lack all such things. I was received with great ceremony and much weeping — evidence of their pleasure. In return for their trouble, I received them into the number of your children, following this with full instructions concerning your orders, repeated several times a day so that they would fully comprehend. This appeared to give them great satisfaction, and they thanked me heartily, promising to do wonders.

I ordered that the Assiniboin of the Red River also be notified that there were Frenchmen among them, who would

not abandon them as long as they behaved sensibly; they should recognize your kindness to them in sending what they needed from such a great distance. Their kinsman, an old man I had brought with me, could tell them what had happened day by day. This man, on his part, spared no pains to inform them, and to demonstrate to them what it meant to have dealings with the French. The council was concluded with great weeping and hearty thanks from the Indians.

Several days later I secured a guide who, with others, I paid to accompany me on my journey and to carry my baggage. On the evening of the 9th, La Marque arrived, with his brother, the Sieur Nolan, and eight men, in two canoes. This pleased me very much, and I expressed my gratitude to La Marque for the trouble he had taken in bringing up reinforcements. I inquired of La Marque whether he had left a sufficient number of men at Ft. St. Charles on Lake of the Woods, and how many he had left at Ft. Maurepas. La Marque replied that he had left eight men at the first place with two traders, and had brought all his goods in his canoes, not with the expectation of being able to fill them all, since he was unable to bring any great quantity of goods, but because he had promised to join me, and did not wish to break his word. He said that I would need

men for the journey, and that he had brought them without loss to himself, since he would have no need of them during the winter.

I thanked him, observing that if he made no profit from the journey, at least he and his men would be spared the expense of the trip until their return. La Marque said that he wished to share the expense, but I replied that this could not be. It was sufficient that he should furnish men, and himself go on the trip, without being at any expense, I had already provided for this. At his request, I gave him a place in the fort on which to build a house, large enough to lodge all [7] his men upon returning from our trip.

On the 15th, the fort and the houses having been finished, I began making preparations for my departure. La Marque informed me that he had brought de Louvière to the forks, with two canoes, in order to build a fort [Fort Rouge], to serve the peoples of the Red River. I approved of this, provided that the Indians were notified.

On the 16th I had the long roll sounded, for inspection of everyone, and selected those I would need for my expedition. Following an inspection of arms, I caused your orders concerning the post to be read, and then detached twenty men — ten of La Marque's and ten of mine —

whom I ordered to be ready to leave on the 18th. To each of them I issued a pound of powder and twenty ball, with shoes (soullier), an axe, and a kettle for his use on the journey. To each man, both French and Indian, I also gave a four pound bag of powder, sixty ball, two fathoms of tobacco, and various small goods such as awls, gun flints, gun screws, and firesteels - more for their own needs than anything else. In a leather bag were placed the goods I wished to use as presents, and this bag our guide's wife carried for me. Everything I needed for my own use was carried by my servant and slave.

When this distribution was completed, I had Sanschagrín, a man of good judgment, wise and prudent, who served as sergeant under me, received as commandant in my absence, taking my two sons with me. Leaving with Sanschagrín two soldiers and ten engagés to guard the fort, I then gave him orders and written instructions about everything he would have to do during my absence.

On the 18th, everything being in good order at the fort, I had all our party set out, ordering them to make camp nearby. I and La Marque left about noon. Since the beaver were not in season, I encouraged the Indians left at the fort to hunt buffalo, in order to supply meat for

the men I had left. Our small party consisted of fifty-two persons - twenty engagés, all good men, La Marque, his brother, my two sons, a servant and a slave; the rest were Indians.

The third day after our departure, a village of forty Assiniboin families overtook us, with the intention of holding a council. The chief begged that I remain for a day, to afford the Assiniboin the pleasure of seeing and feasting us. On the urging of the guide, I consented. Giving the chief a small present of powder, I repeated the statements I had made to all the rest. The chief was very grateful and made all sorts of promises; the Indians would take meat to the French [at the fort], and would hunt to the best of their ability, in order that they might have what they needed.

On the 21st, we proceeded on our way, as far as the first mountain (la premiere montagne), twenty-six leagues distant from our fort, going south by west (sud guard [quart] de sud ouest); from the first mountain to the second (la seconde) going west by north (ouest guard norouest), twenty-four leagues. From the top (pointe) of the second mountain to go directly to the Mantannes we should have gone southwest by west (sudouest guard ouest).

But we were unable to [8] follow a straight course; to make two or three leagues in a straight line we had to go three or four. From the fort, the distance is probably one hundred and twenty leagues, west southwest (ouest sudouest), but our guide lengthened this by some fifty or sixty leagues and a number of stops, to which <sup>we</sup> were obliged to consent in spite of ourselves, letting the finest fall weather slip by encamped. Thus we spent forty-six days, in accomplishing what we should have been able to do in sixteen or twenty days at most.

Of necessity, we had to be patient. Nothing that I could say to the guide to make him hasten was of the slightest use. To crown our misfortunes, he took us twenty-two leagues off our route in order to reach a village of one hundred and two families that he had gone to find. He brought back eight men, sent by the chiefs of the village to invite me to join them. They all wished to accompany me to the Mantannes, and told me that the Sioux often visited the region and that I would need an escort. We had to resign ourselves to going there.

We arrived at this place on the afternoon of November 18th. A number of scouts came out to meet us, and we were received with great joy. They led us, La Marque, his brother, and my sons to the dwelling (cabanne) of one of the chiefs, where all was ready to receive us. A great feast was made

for us and all the men, who did not lack a good appetite.

On the 19th I assembled the chiefs and head men of the village in the dwelling I occupied. On your behalf I made them a present of powder, ball, knives, and tobacco, telling them that I was receiving them into the number of your children, that if they behaved sensibly you promised not to abandon them, and that this day the French were established in their country and would provide them with all necessities. They, on their part, must hunt beaver and take good care of their own lands. At present you do not wish for war, but wish to pacify all the country, in order that your children may live in peace. To their number I was adding each day.

I made the same recital to them that I had made to all the others. There was a great display of gratitude, with profuse tears and the ceremony of placing their hands on my head, taking me in your place as their father, and our Frenchmen as brothers, placing their hands on their heads likewise, and weeping.

This ceremony ended, the <sup>village</sup>crier addressed me: "We thank you, my father, for having been willing to trouble to come to us. We shall accompany you to the Mantannes and will bring you back to your fort. We have already sent four men to notify the Mantannes. They have just returned, reporting that the Mantannes are very happy at the prospect of your going to them, and will come to meet you. We have sent [9] four other young men to conduct them to a place we have



selected. We will go slowly, hunting along the way in order to have fat on arriving, to eat with the Mantannes' corn. This they eat cooked with water, since most of the time they have neither meat nor fat."

I thanked them for their good will and urged them to take us there as soon as possible; they could see as well as I that the season was well advanced. Knowing that the Mantannes were not supplied with fat, I bought some in the village, giving all our party as much of it as they were willing to carry, and having some carried for us by the Indians, who were paid for this. I informed our Frenchmen that I had in mind spending a part of the winter among the Mantannes, and that they would need to be well loaded with fat; if they were not they would have to eat their corn and beans with water.

On the 20th, the <sup>whole</sup> Assiniboin village set out on the march, to go seventeen leagues to the place of rendezvous with the Mantannes. Every day the Indians talked to us about the white men we were about to see, — French like ourselves, — who said they were descended from us. Everything we had heard gave hope of making a notable discovery. Along the way, La Marque and I planned what we should do, especially what we should be ready to say, thinking the accounts true, though later we had to discount them greatly. I called La Marque's attention to the excellent order in which the Assiniboin marched, to avoid being taken by surprise —

going steadily over the prairies, the hills and valleys, from the first mountain. The march never ceased to be fatiguing, ascending and descending many times a day. There were magnificent plains, three or four leagues in extent.

The marching order of the Assiniboin, especially when they are numerous, is in three columns, with some scouts ahead and on the flanks, and with a good rear guard; the old and lame marched in the middle, forming a central column. I kept all the French together as well as I could. When, as often happens, the scouts catch sight of a herd of buffalo along the way, they raise a cry, which is at once carried to the rear guard. Then all the most active men of the columns join the vanguard, to surround the animals. Having killed a number of them, each takes as much of the meat as he wishes. This is done without stopping the march. The vanguard choose the camp-sites, beyond which no one goes. They even make the dogs carry wood for fires, frequently being obliged to camp in open prairie, where the islands of timber are distant from each other.

On the morning of the 28th, we reached the place chosen for meeting the Mantannes, who arrived towards evening, a chief with thirty men and the four Assiniboin. After the chief, from an elevation, had for some time examined the extent of the camp, which indeed made a fine appearance, I had him brought to my dwelling, at one side of which a place had been prepared to receive him. He came and seated himself

near me. One [10] of his people who came in with him presented me with Indian corn in the ear and a roll of their tobacco, which is not very good because they are not familiar with preparing it as we do. It is very much like ours except that it is not planted [by hand] and is cut green, everything being used, blossoms and leaves together. I gave the chief some of mine, which he found to be very good.

I admit that I was surprised, having expected to see a people different from other Indians, especially in view of the account we had been given. They [the Mantannes] are not at all different from the Assiniboin; they go naked, covered only with a buffalo robe carelessly worn without a breechcloth. I knew by this time that we would have to discount everything we had been told about them.

The chief spoke to me in Assiniboin, expressing to me the pleasure my arrival among them would afford all their people. He begged me to admit them to the number of your children, and desired hereafter to be united with us; he said that I might dispose of all that he had. The chief begged me to stay at his fort, which was the nearest, smaller than any of the rest but well supplied with food. He said that there were six forts belonging to this nation; his was the only one somewhat removed from the river. The chief had received two necklaces (colliers) from me, which would be shown me on arriving at the fort. These people had always hoped to see me, said he.

I thanked him for all his attention and offers, saying that I had come a long way in order to establish friendly relations with them, and that I would address them as soon as I arrived at their fort.

The chief at once played a trick on us. Having examined our camp on his arrival, as I have said, he foresaw that there would be a great company if everyone went to the fort. This would entail a great consumption of corn, their custom being to provide food freely for all who visited them, selling only the corn taken away. The chief gave the Assiniboin profuse thanks for having brought the French to them, saying that they could not have come at a better time, for he had been warned that the Sioux were about to arrive. He begged us, as he did the Assiniboin, to be good enough to give help, <sup>greatly</sup> relying on our valor and courage.

Like the Assiniboin, I fell into the trap - with this difference, that the Assiniboin <sup>were</sup> left dumbfounded, whereas I was much pleased, thinking I had found an opportunity to avenge myself on the accursed Sioux. I promised him every assistance, if the Sioux came while we were with them, both for myself and for all our Frenchmen, and for this the chief thanked me. He was then invited to a feast and questioned by the Assiniboin about the Sioux. The Assiniboin, though numerous, and strong and hardy men, are not brave;

they greatly fear the Sioux, whom they consider brave. The Mantannes know their weakness, and profit by it on occasion.

A council was held to decide what should be done. The majority vote was that they should go no farther, and that I should be warned of the risk I would run if I still wished [11] to continue.

An old man rose and spoke vigorously. "Do not think our father a coward," he said, "I know him better than you do. I have been with him since he left his fort. Don't imagine that the Sioux can frighten him, or any of his men. What will he think of us? He has gone out of his way to reach us, assenting to our demand to accompany him to the Mantannes and to guide him again to his fort. He would have reached there today if he had not listened to us, and now you are thinking of abandoning him and letting him go on alone. This shan't happen! If you fear the Sioux, let us leave our village here until our return, and all men able to march follow our father."

Everyone agreed with the old man's opinion. It was decided that only a few men should remain, to protect the women; all the rest would accompany me. I was told of the result of the council. Word was sent throughout the village, to warn everyone to be ready to march the day

following, the 30th of the month. This afforded the Mantannes an opportunity for profit, by trading their corn, tobacco, buffalo hair (poilles), and dyed feathers, which they knew the Assiniboin value highly. The latter had brought to trade muskets, axes, kettle, powder, ball, knives, and awls. The Mantannes, as in everything else, are much craftier in trade than the Assiniboin, who are always being cheated by them.

We left on the morning of the 30th, about six hundred men and several women without children, the best walkers. On the evening the the third day of our march, when about seven leagues from the first fort of the Mantannes, I was told that an Assiniboin had taken the bag from my slave along the way, under pretext of relieving him, and had returned to the village. My box, containing my papers and many other things needed, was in this bag. I immediately hired two young men to run after it, and paid them, making them promise to bring the bag to me at the Mantannes, where I would wait for them. They set out during the night and overtook the rascal, who had already fled from the village. They made him return everything, but then returned to the village, keeping the property and expecting to restore it to me on my return, but not daring to come

to find me for fear of the Sioux. Thus I found myself deprived of things very much needed.

The crier announced that we must leave before four o'clock in the morning in order to arrive in good time at the fort. About noon, a league and a half from that place, on a small river, I found a large number of people who had come to meet us, and had lighted fires while awaiting us. They had brought boiled corn, and meal cooked with pumpkin, enough food for all of us. Two chiefs had made a place for me near a fire and gave me something to eat and something to smoke. La Marque arrived soon after me, [12] and I invited him to sit nearby and eat while he rested.

We remained there resting fully two hours. Then I was informed that it was time to go. I had one of my sons carry the flag, painted with the arms of France, and march at the front, and ordered the French to follow in marching order. Nolan relieved my son in carrying the flag, each in turn. The Mantannes would not allow me to walk, but insisted on carrying me. I had to consent, being urged by the Assiniboin, who said that it would cause much dissatisfaction if I refused.

At four arpents [about fifty rods] from the fort, on a small hill, a party of old men of the fort, accompanied by a great number of young men, were awaiting me, to present

the calumet and to show me the two necklaces I had sent them four or five years previous. I and La Marque were given a seat. I received their compliments, the substance of which was the pleasure they felt at our arrival. I ordered my son, the Chevalier, to have all our Frenchmen draw up in line, the flag four paces distant in front; all the Assiniboin who had muskets placed themselves in line like the French. After returning their compliments, I caused three volleys to be fired in salute to the fort. A great number of Indians had come to meet us, but it was nothing compared to the number who appeared on the ramparts and along the ditches.

We marched in regular order to the fort, which I entered December 3d, at four o'clock in the afternoon, escorted by all the French and Assiniboin. We were led to the dwelling of the head chief, which though large was not large enough to hold all who wished to enter. The crowd was so great that the Assiniboin and Mantannes trod on each others' heels. There was room only where we were — La Marque, his brother, and my sons. I asked that the crowd be made to leave, to make room for the Frenchmen, and that they put the baggage in a safe place, telling them that there would be plenty of time to see us. Everyone was cleared out, but not soon enough, for the bag of goods



containing all my presents was stolen, through the great neglect of one of our engagés, in whose care it had been placed before reaching the fort. On entering the dwelling he had put down his load without paying much attention to the bag, which he had put beside him in the dense crowd. I found myself considerably inconvenienced — my box lost, and my bag of presents, very much needed here and worth [13] more than three hundred livres.

The Assiniboin seemed very much distressed, and made a great search at once, but to no avail. The fort is full of caches (caves), in which it is easy to hide anything. The chief of the Mantannes appeared to be greatly troubled at my loss, and to console me told me that there were a great many rascals among them, but that he would do all he could to find out something. Had I wished to avail myself of the offer of the Assiniboin to use force, I might have found something, but I preferred to suffer loss, and keep everything quiet, since I wanted to spend a part of the winter among them, in order to learn more of the country beyond.

On the 4th, I had the Mantannes and Assiniboin chiefs assemble in the dwelling where I was staying. I made them my present of powder and ball, telling them that I was unable to give them anything else. They knew that everything I

had brought to give them had been taken from me. I declared that I intended to remain for a while, to learn more of the region, in accord with your orders, and this could not be done in a day. The Mantannes expressed satisfaction at this, assuring me that I need not fear running short of food. They had food in reserve, more than I would need. Their forts were all well provisioned, and I might dispose of this food since I was master there.

One of the older Assiniboin, the village crier, said to me: "My father, we have brought you here, and I do not doubt that here you will be well cared for. We had hoped to take you back to your fort, but you are master, and may do what you think best. We shall come again to get you, whenever you wish." Then, addressing the Mantannes, he said: "We are leaving our father with you; take good care of him and of all the French. Learn what he can teach. He is a spirit; he knows how to do everything. We love and fear him; do you as we do. We are leaving, much grieved at the theft committed against our father on coming among you. What must he think of you? You cannot deny that it is a shameful thing — the Frenchman comes to see you and you rob him. You do not understand who it is you are speaking to. It is very fortunate for you that our father is good natured, or things would not have turned out as

they did. I am not afraid to tell you that he could have made you find the bag had he wished - and there is still time to do so if he wishes."

Here I made him stop speaking, seeing that the old man was beginning to lose his temper.

One of the chiefs of the Mantannes replied: "Neither I nor any of my people had any part in what you accuse us of; I do not speak for any of the rest. I am very sorry for what has happened. I have had my young men search everywhere, and have nothing to reproach myself about. Who knows if it wasn't an Assiniboin? There were some of both tribes in the great crowd. You can't answer that. You needn't be concerned about our father or his party. He is master here as he would be at home, and we pray that he will number us among his children."

This I did at once by placing my hands on the head of each chief - the customary ceremony. They responded with great shouts of joy and thanks. I then said to the Assiniboin: "I am sending four Frenchmen to my fort, to give news of me. I ask you to take them there as soon as you can. I left powder at the village and everything needed [14] to take them there." The council then ended with profuse thanks on all sides.

But the Assiniboin did not yet talk of leaving, though they had purchased all they could afford, such as the painted buffalo robes, hides of deer and antelope (chevreuille), well dressed and decorated with hair and feathers, dyed feather, hair, garters, head bands, and belts. They [the Mantannes] dress hides better than any other people, and do work in hair and feathers very pleasingly; the Assiniboin are unable to do as well. They are sharp in trading, stripping the Assiniboin of all they possess, such as muskets, powder, ball, kettles, axes, knives, and awls.

Seeing the great consumption of food made each day by the Assiniboin, and fearing that they might stay a long time, the Mantannes started a rumor that the Sioux were near, and that several of their hunters had seen them. The Assiniboin fell into the trap, and quickly made up their minds to decamp, not wishing to have to fight. A Mantanne chief, by a sign, made me understand that the rumor about the Sioux was merely to make the Assiniboin leave. On the morning of the 6th they all departed in great haste, thinking that the Sioux were nearby and fearing lest they fall upon them along the way.

The chief with whom I had lived in the Assiniboin village brought five men to stay with me, saying: "My

father, I am sorry to leave you. I still hope that you will join us in a little while, and I shall travel slowly. Here are five of my young men, whom I give to remain here with you. They will bring you along whenever you wish to leave."

I gave him a small present, by way of thanking him, saying that he would soon be aware that I was grateful, and intended to reward him for his attentions. The chief then left, with great protestations of friendship.

Shortly afterward, I was notified that our interpreter, whom I had paid well to insure keeping him, had run away despite all the offers my son the Chevalier had made to him, and was following an Assiniboin woman he had become enamored of, but who would not consent to stay with him. He was a young man of the Cree nation who spoke good Assiniboin. There are several Mantannes also who speak this language very well. Thus I could easily make myself understood; my son spoke Cree and the Cree interpreted in Assiniboin.

But now, to crown our misfortune, we were reduced to making ourselves understood by means of signs and gestures. Had I distrusted the interpreter, who assured me daily that he would [15] always remain with me and never desert me, I should have profited by the time he was with me 'o ask the

questions I wished to put to the Mantannes. But, flattering myself that I had a man on whom I could rely, I had put off doing so until after the departure of the Assiniboin.

I was much hampered all day. All I was able to find out I learned from the few questions I asked in the evening after almost everyone had withdrawn, such as whether there were many people along the river, descending, and what tribes, and whether they had any knowledge of more distant places. I was informed that there were five forts belonging to their nation (nations), on the two sides of the river, much larger than that in which we then were. At a day's journey from the last of their forts are the Panoux, who have several forts; then come the Pananis. These two tribes hold a large region, but are at war with the Mantannes, and have been for the last four years. Formerly these tribes were always closely united and in alliance with each other. They said that they would later tell me the causes that had set them at odds. The Panana [sic] and Pananis build their forts and dwellings as do the Mantannes, and in summer have corn and tobacco.

The lower part of the river, I was told, is so wide that from one side one cannot see land on the other, and the water is unfit to drink. All these regions are inhabited by

white men like ourselves, who work iron. The word "iron" among all these tribes of this region means all kinds of metals, called iron. These white men travel only on horseback, both for hunting and for war. They cannot be killed with arrow or musket, because they are covered with iron, but by killing the horse one can catch the man easily, since he cannot run away. They have bucklers of iron, very light in color, and fight with lances and sabres, in the use of which they are very skillful. Women are never seen in the fields. Their forts and houses are of stone.

I inquired whether there were any forests, and whether the prairies extended on all sides, in hills and valleys. The Indians replied that along the river were woods, here and there, and also on the prairies, in clumps of timber. The farther one descended the river, the greater were the slopes, many of which were bare bluffs of fine stone, especially along the river.

I asked if it took very long to reach the white men, the horsemen, and was told that the Panana and Pananis had some horses like the whites. It would take the Mantannes a whole summer to make the journey, even if only the men made the trip. But because they are at war with the Panana they would not dare go very far, the trails being closed to them. They said that the buffalo were abundant on the prairies,

far larger and fatter than most of those we had seen there, the hair being white or of several colors. They showed us some horns split in half, which hold nearly three pints, and are of a greenish color. There are some of these in all the dwellings, and serve as ladles -- proof that the Indians have killed many at times when the trails were open. This was all I could learn, and that by chance, having depended on having my interpreter, and on having ample time to inform myself fully, at leisure.

On the 6th, after the departure of the Assiniboin, I sent my son, the Chevalier, with Nolan, six Frenchmen, [16] and several Mantannes to the nearest fort, which was on the bank of the river. If they were well received they were to stay over night, to inform themselves as best they could concerning the direction of the river on which this people lived, and whether they had knowledge of the lower part in accord with what we had already been told. They were to learn all they could about it, as best they could by signs and gestures.

After their departure La Marque and I walked about, to see the size of their [fort and] fortifications. I gave orders to have the dwellings counted, and it was found that there are probably as many as one hundred and thirty. All the streets, open places (places), and dwellings are similar,



and some of our Frenchmen often lost their way among them. The streets and open places are kept very clean, and the ramparts are smooth and broad. The palisade is braced with cross pieces mortised to the posts fifteen feet apart, with a lining (quinze pieds a quinze points doublé). Green hides, fastened at the top, are hung for lining where needed, as in the bastions. There are four such bastions at each curtain, well-flanked. The fort is built on a height in open prairie, with a ditch more than fifteen feet deep, and fifteen to eighteen feet wide. The fort can be entered only by means of steps (des marche) or timbers (des piesses), which are removed when there is danger from the enemy. If all their forts are similar to this one, they may be called impregnable against Indians. Their fortification is not at all Indian-like.

This nation is of mixed blood, white and black. The women are fairly good looking, especially the light complexioned ones; many of them have blond or fair hair. They are a very industrious people, both men and women. Their dwellings are large and spacious, and are divided into apartments by broad planks. Nothing is left lying about, all their belongings being kept in large bags hung from the posts. Their beds are made like tombs, surrounded by hides. Everyone sleeps naked, both men and women. The

men go completely naked all the time, except for a buffalo robe covering. A great part of the women go naked like the men, with the difference that they wear a small loose loincloth, about a hand-breadth wide and a span long, sewed to a girdle in front. All the women have this kind of covering even when they wear a skirt, so that they are never embarrassed or keep their legs closed when they sit down, as all other Indian women do. Some of them wear a kind of shirt of antelope hide, well softened. There are many antelope here, a very small animal.

Their fort has a great number of caches, in which they keep everything they have, such as corn, meat, fat, dressed robes, and bearskins. They are well supplied with these things, the currency of the region. The more they have the richer they consider themselves. They are fond of tattooing, but never more than half the body is marked, either men or women.

They make wicker work very skilfully, both trays and baskets. They use earthen pots which they make, like many other nations, for cooking food. They are for the most part [17] great eaters, and are very fond of feasts. Every day they brought me more than twenty dishes - corn, beans, and pumpkins, all cooked. La Marque, who did not dislike feasts, attended them constantly, with my sons. Since I

did not go to them, my share was sent to me.

The men are large and tall, very active, and the greater part fairly good looking. They have fine features, and are very affable. Most of the women do not have Indian features. The men play a kind of ball game (joux de boule) on the open spaces and ramparts.

Nolan and my son returned <sup>on</sup> the evening of the 7th, well pleased with their journey, having been well received and strongly urged to remain longer. They reported to me that the fort is on the bank of the river, and once again as large as this one. The open places and streets are very fine and clean. The palisade and fortification there are in better condition, the whole built in the same style as that in which we were. From all they could learn, all the forts are alike — to see one is to see them all, except that some are much larger than others. The farthest is the largest of all, and nearest to the Panana. According to the compass, the river appears to run southwest by south (sudouest guard de sud); by signs they were made to understand that the lower part probably runs to the sea southwest by west (sudouest guard ouest). The Indians often interrupted the conversation; not being able to understand questions asked, they answered about other things, because they did not comprehend.

The waters of the river run very rapidly, and there are many shallows. The water is not good to drink, being somewhat brackish. Since leaving the last mountain, we have everywhere found almost all of the marshes and ponds brackish or sulphurous. All they could understand was that there are men like ourselves on the lower part of the river, who make woolen stuffs and linen. They are very numerous, and carry on wars with a great number of Indians.

"We saw that it was useless to attempt to question the Mantannes further, since they could not understand us" [the two reported]. "We did not stop going to the feasts all the while we remained at their fort, but still could not attend all to which we were invited. We noticed that on the prairies there are several small forts containing forty or fifty dwellings, built like the larger forts. These are uninhabited at present, and we were given to understand that the Mantannes go there during the summer, to work their fields, and that they have a great deal of corn in the caches, in reserve." This was all the information the two could give me from their visit.

On December 8th, I had my son observe the elevation [of the sun] (prendre hauteur), which he found to be forty-eight degrees and twelve minutes. I had consulted with La Marque, the evening of the 7th, about what we should do. He knew, as

I did, that there were few things left for presents, and this made it impossible to continue any further. The season was too unpleasant to undertake anything more. Above all, there was no interpreter, nor any hope [18] of obtaining one during the winter. We had good reason to fear that the trails would become impassable in the spring because of high water, according to report, and <sup>[that we]</sup> should be in danger of arriving after the departure of the canoes [eastward]. The powder I had left would probably not be sufficient to provide for all our needs during the course of the winter. Considering the few trade goods that remained, we might find ourselves much inconvenienced, with so many men, since there was no longer anything to pay for guides. The Indian will give service only as long as he is paid, and in advance, and considers promises a subterfuge. On the other hand, we had reason to hesitate setting out on a march in the most inclement season of the year.

Taking everything into consideration, we decided that we must go, leaving behind only two men, capable of learning the language of the Mantannes quickly. One was left in the fort where we were staying, and the other in the next nearest fort. Being alone, each would learn much more quickly, and could later give us every kind of information.

La Marque chose one of his engagés, a man of intelligence and one of his best men, who knew how to write. I gladly accepted him, and gave him as assistant my own servant, although he was very useful to me and was very much attached to me personally. I preferred to deprive myself of his services, considering the help he would later be. I knew him to be a man of quick wit, good memory, having a great aptitude for language, and very wise and God-fearing. I gave these men full instructions on all they had to do, and La Marque, on his part, promised to send for them during the course of the coming summer.

Having thus arranged for the two men I was leaving behind, I notified our five Assiniboin, making them understand that I wished to leave shortly. This pleased them greatly. Not being able to make myself understood otherwise, I directed, by signs, that the following morning two of them leave with the two Frenchmen, and that everything should be made ready, to go quickly to their village to warn the Indians there to expect us; I would leave four days after their departure, and was going to prepare for my journey. I then made my plan known to the Mantannes, which seemed to grieve them very much. Pointing out the two Frenchmen I was leaving in my place, I asked that they be well taken care of. The Indians thanked me heartily, with

great protestations of friendship and fidelity. I made them understand by this action that I would not abandon them. I asked the chief to provide corn meal for our journey.

The news soon spread throughout the fort. On the morning of the 8th I had the two Frenchmen set out, guided by the two Assiniboin, as has been said, to go to the Assiniboin village to notify them of my own departure. Corn meal was brought me during the day, much more than I needed. I thanked the Indians and gave them some [19] needles, which they value highly. They could have loaded a hundred men for me very quickly, in the course of the day; everyone was eager to bring me what was needed. I had each of our men take as much of the corn as he would, and this was done in a very short while. Having provided everything that would be needed by all of our men, I had the chiefs and head men of the Mantannes assemble, and gave them a present of powder, ball, and several small articles they valued highly because of their lack of them.

I gave the head chief a flag and a lead tablet, which I had decorated with ribbon at the four corners. This tablet was placed in a box, so that it might be kept forever, in memory of my having taken possession (prise de possession que je fesois) of their lands, in the name of the King.

It will be well guarded, from father to son - better than it would if I had buried it in the ground, where it might have been in danger of being stolen. I made them understand as best I could that I was leaving them this token in memory of the visit of the French to their country. I should greatly have liked to make myself clearly understood, and to talk to them about things that would be of advantage to them and to us, but this was not possible, to my great regret and to theirs.

I had labored so diligently that by the evening of the 8th everything was ready for our departure, which I now found could be made sooner than I had previously planned. I fell sick, however, on the night of the 8th and 9th, and soon was very sick. I did not know what to think of this. I kept to my bed for three days, and finding myself much better on the fourth, prepared to leave the next day. I gave the two men I was leaving enough to defray their expenses liberally, and even to pay for a guide if they should need one to bring them back to our fort. I also informed them once more of the reasons that obliged me to leave them there. As soon as they could make themselves understood, they were to overlook nothing to learn who this nation of white people were, what this iron was that they



worked, whether to their knowledge there were any mines, what nations were above as one ascended the river, and if they knew of a height of land - in short, to overlook nothing in obtaining all possible information on the country.

On December 13th, to the great regret of all the Mantannes, I set out, though ill, in the hope that my illness would not be serious, and that in the [Assiniboin] village I would recover my box, in which I kept some medicines. A chief came to accompany us for a league and a half, from which point I sent him back. He made a great display of the regret he felt at my leaving, making a sign to ask me not to abandon him but to return, and that he would accompany us. I gave him a small amount of powder, once more asking that he take good care of the two Frenchmen I had left with them. The chief made a sign that he would take one of them into his own family, and I sent him off, having thanked him heartily.

That evening I noticed that there were only two Assiniboin with us. They explained to me that one of them had remained with our Frenchmen, not wanting to leave them, and that he would not return until summer, with them.

I reached the Assiniboin village on the 24th, still very sick. We had met with excessively cold weather, which caused us much delay. My box was restored to me, nothing

in it having been touched. [20] The thief had been satisfied with the slave's bag, which was returned to me empty. When I had rested a little, I reproached the Assiniboin for having lied to me about the Mantannes; in all that they had told me I had found very little truth. They answered that they had not intended to refer to the Mantannes in saying that "they" were like us, but meant the people lower down the river, who worked iron.

An Assiniboin rose above the rest and said to me: "I am the only one here who can speak well about these things. You have not understood clearly what was said to you. I do not tell lies. Last summer I killed one of the people, who was covered with iron, as I have many times told before this. If I had not first killed the horse, I could not have got the man."

I asked him: "What booty of his have you brought back, to show us that you are telling the truth?"

To this he replied: "As I was about to cut off his head I saw some men on horseback, who were blocking my retreat. I had a great deal of trouble to save myself, and could not keep anything to bring away. I threw away everything I had, even my robe, and ran away naked. What I am telling is true and I shall have it repeated to you next you shall see them. What I have just said I shall repeat to you. One cannot

see the other side of this river. The water is salty. It is a country of mountains, with great valleys between them, of very fine land. There are many buffalo, fat and large, white and of different colors. There are many deer and antelope. I have seen their corn fields; no women are to be seen in them. What I am telling you is without deceit; you will learn more about it in the future."

After three days' rest, I resumed my journey. I reached the first mountain on January 9th [1739], and here we camped for a long time. Seeing that I was still very sick, La Marque decided to go on ahead, with the purpose of sending me aid. He arrived [at Ft. La Reine] on the first of February, I not until the 10th, greatly fatigued and very sick. At thirty-five leagues from the fort, I received the help he had sent, which I appreciated very much, being in great need of it. Never in my life have I endured so much misery, sickness, and fatigue as I did on this journey. After two weeks' rest I found myself somewhat recovered.

[La Marque went <sup>on</sup> to Ft. Maurepas on March 16, leaving his brother and a large number of his men at Ft. La Reine. Provisions were nearly gone, there being forty-two persons there, but the shortage was supplied by Indians who appeared there. La Marque wrote on April 16 that he had seen no Indians, and was in despair. [21]

[La Vérendrye sent the Chevalier on April 16 to explore the vicinity of Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan, where he himself planned to go on the return of the convoy in the fall. The Chevalier was to obtain information about mines, make a circuit of the lake, and to try to prevent the Indians from going to the English, by making them hope for his father's early arrival there. A letter received from La Marque on April 23 said that no Indians had as yet been seen, and that he had decided to go in search of them on the Winnipeg River. Learning that a great band of Assiniboin were camped on Lake Manitoba, making canoes for the English, La Vérendrye sent Sanschagrín with an engagé to bring them in. Five of the Assiniboin arrived on April 30, with news that many of the tribe were coming; only a few of them actually arrived, however, when they appeared on May 3. Nolan left on May 10, though La Vérendrye thought it unfortunate that he depart empty handed. Other Assiniboin arrived on May 18 for brief trading, and others were expected shortly.]

I [have] discovered during this brief period a river that runs to the west. All the rivers and lakes of which I have any knowledge run toward Hudson Bay, the north sea, except this river of the Mantannes. I shall obtain complete

information about this river this summer, either myself or through someone acting on my behalf.

[La Vérendrye delayed the eastbound canoes until May 28, waiting uselessly for the Indians, only a few of whom appeared. They had thought he would wait all summer for them,[22] but he assured them that as soon as his son returned, and the two men he had left with the Mantannes, he would depart at once.]

[Not signed]

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The manuscript from which the preceding text was taken is not of the primary character needed for historical certainty. It is, however, the only circumstantial account of La Vérendrye's activities during the years 1738 and 1739, when the upper Missouri River basin was first entered. Almost without exception, nevertheless, the document has been <sup>inaccurately</sup> referred to as the "journal" of the period. Although the document relates events and activities in chronological order, the manuscript is not a true field record, that is, with entries made from day to day at various places on the trip. Rather, it is a letter in journal form - not an actual letter sent, but a draft of such a letter. Nor does it appear to be an official draft, for it is neither in La Vérendrye's handwriting, nor is it signed or endorsed by him.

A comparison of the manuscript with known examples of his handwriting clearly demonstrates that the writing is that of another person, perhaps a professional clerk. The narrative is smooth and flowing, as though the writer were copying from another document, and is relatively free from errors and corrections such as might have been made by a ~~inexperienced~~ copyist. Parkman referred to the account as "ill-written and sometimes obscure," but his statement can only have been made from a study of the first printed text,

*and badly translated*

that of Brymner, which was unskillfully edited.<sup>2</sup> Inasmuch as the manuscript is not signed, bears no corrections in his hand, and does not even carry La Vérendrye's name at its end, it is possible that he never even saw the draft. Had he reviewed the manuscript, we could expect corrections from him and that he would have signed his name to it.

It would be important to know whether the original letter, the draft of which has been preserved, was actually sent to and received by the governor. This information ~~might~~ <sup>would</sup> materially assist in establishing the authenticity of the document. Unfortunately, no such letter is known, either in archives in Paris or Canada. Had the original been forwarded to Paris by the governor, it might have been preserved among the voluminous papers of the period extant there. If the original remained among personal or official papers of the governor, in New France — or in France itself, to which Beauharnois retired — the original is not now known. The destruction of the archives at Quebec by various fires in the eighteenth century may explain the lack of the original letter in Canada, as it does the loss of many other documents.

Can anything be learned of such a letter from those documents that do survive? From evidence in the draft itself, it would appear that the original was composed

(or completed) about May 28, 1739, since the last event mentioned is the departure eastward of the canoes on that date. Precisely when this party reached Montreal and Quebec is not known, but the letter, if sent, would doubtless have been transmitted by this means.

On August 14, 1739, Beauharnois, writing to Paris, said that he had received no recent news concerning La Vérendrye.<sup>3</sup> The governor nevertheless says he "has been assured" that La Vérendrye had, as he puts it, reached the Indians called the Blancs Barbus (Bearded White People), hitherto unvisited. It is curious that, in writing Maurepas, Beauharnois should appear to confuse groups of Indians with groups of Whites; La Vérendrye would now have not perpetuated this misunderstanding, nor would he have claimed to have reached the Whites.

Sometime after August 14, however, Beauharnois did receive news of La Vérendrye's recent activities, probably on the return of the party. This information he included in a dispatch dated October 6, 1739. This dispatch refers to a "letter" from La Vérendrye, dated May 28, which he had received. This letter would seem to be the original, the draft under discussion. But the governor did not quote from the letter of May 28, and there is no means by which the point can be settled.



Strangely enough, Beauharnois' letter of October 6 refers to another source of information on La Vérendrye, and this second source may have contained the only information available to him at the time. This second source, <sup>summarized</sup> ~~quoted~~ by Beauharnois, was a letter <sup>to the governor</sup> from the Jesuit Father Pierre du Jaunay, written from his mission station at Michilimackinac on July 11. This letter - no longer extant - mentioned the Mantannes and the prospects of successful mission efforts among them. It stated that there were seven villages of these people, the smallest of which contained 1500 souls; that according to reports, the people called the Pananas were still more numerous; and that just beyond them were the Pananis. It is difficult to believe that if Beauharnois had <sup>by early October received</sup> ~~had~~ the detailed record of the expedition of 1738-1739 - <sup>another</sup> ~~the original of the~~ draft of the "journal" under discussion - he should have depended on a second-hand authority rather than on the explorer's own record. One is forced to conclude that the communication of May 28 from La Vérendrye had been very brief; was not the original detailed account now sought; and that Beauharnois had not, even by October, seen such a narrative.

Beauharnois' dispatch to Paris, on October 6, was of course accompanied by an extract from a "journal" of La Vérendrye. This might be the record sought, but no such

item is preserved in Paris. An extract of another "journal" is, however, in the archives there, which contains information on the customs of the Mantannes, as well as reports about the Spanish.<sup>5</sup> But this extract differs materially from the draft in Ottawa. The information it contains was taken from "the reports of two Frenchmen" — the two men, that is, whom La Vérendrye had left on the Missouri on his departure for Ft. La Reine in December, 1738. In the extract in question, from a second "journal," these two men are said to have returned to Ft. La Reine on September 29, 1739. Beauharnois, in Quebec, could obviously not have known of this event by October 6. ~~The extract of the "journal" with the information obtained from these two men, moreover, pertains to a later time than the document at Ottawa, and~~ <sup>therefore</sup> ~~this second "journal" cannot be the one referred to by Beauharnois on October 6. Obviously, documents have been wrongly associated in the Paris archives.~~

There is, unfortunately, no way by which one may establish the time at which Beauharnois received from La Vérendrye a detailed account of the events of the period from July 1738 to May 1739, in which he was personally involved. Nor can we establish the fact that the governor actually received such an account. We do know that the

explorer visited the governor in person in August, 1740. This may well have been the <sup>occasion</sup> ~~time~~ for preparing a record of the western trip. Such a visit would have afforded the officer and the governor an opportunity to discuss the information obtained in 1738 and 1739, and this was surely done then, if not later. But <sup>by</sup> ~~in~~ August, 1740, it would not have been necessary for the governor to transmit to Paris a copy of any record then submitted, if he had already forwarded information relating to a later time -- as seems to be the case from the presence, in Paris, of the extract dealing with the adventures of the two men who had returned to Ft. La Reine in September, 1739.

At present, therefore, there is no evidence that <sup>a draft</sup> ~~original~~ of the "journal" of 1738-1739, describing the first journey to the country of the Mantannes, was ever forwarded to Paris. Nor is there any suggestion, in the surviving documents, that Beauharnois ever received this record. There is, in short, no way to fix precisely the terminal date for the composition of this important document which might help authenticate it.

The lack of a closing signature, or of any endorsements of sender or recipient seems to be enough proof that the draft is not from official or personal papers of Beauharnois. The manuscript is a signature of sheets sewed together, and

looks very much as though it had been taken from a bound volume. It is possible that it is a copy book draft, made from an original in the absence of the author. It was not corrected by La Vérendrye, and a number of mistakes and omissions, which might have been corrected by him, still remain.

The document is probably the product of a copyist, who followed the original intended for the governor, for several reasons. On line 27, page 6, the word Épargné was inserted, in a space left for the purpose when it was first written, as though the copyist had been uncertain of the reading of the original. This is also the case on line 26, page 9, where the words Est en trois were inserted in a space left for the purpose. There are other instances of such insertions.

Examination of the paper and ink of the manuscript affords no light as to the precise date of the draft. The paper appears to be of the period to which the contents relate. It is handmade laid paper, and several sheets show a dim watermark, a fleur-de-lis with letters or numerals, probably identifiable by specialists. The manuscript, in other words, gives every evidence of being a contemporary copy; it does not appear to be a copy made at a much later date by, say, a student of La Vérendrye.

This document has been discussed at this length because of the incautious use to which it has been put by some scholars, who persist in referring to it as a "journal," without qualification. Since the document is a draft, rather than a letter actually received, it is scarcely the primary evidence it has almost universally been considered. On the other hand, despite doubts concerning certain points in it, and the ~~danger~~<sup>risk</sup> of placing too much weight on any particular detail, the account as a whole is convincing, and gives every evidence of general truthfulness and reliability. Even casual statements, such as those on minor incidents of travel and those on customs of the native people, could only have been made by an eyewitness.

In composing the original letter, the author, unquestionably La Vérendrye, had beside him his actual field journals for reference. These must have been more detailed and complete at certain points, and less so at others, than the present draft. Study reveals that it includes material that would not have appeared in the field journals, and was interpolated, while other details that would have appeared in the field notes must have been omitted. Since the letter was being written for a superior, and was more than an account of <sup>mere</sup> dates and events, trivial details that might be of value to historians were probably

omitted. Other remarks were inserted, to clarify or extend original notes, and furnish additional information. La Vérendrye would report only such matters as he thought would interest his superiors, and emphasize such material as would enable him to continue his western explorations.<sup>6</sup> Surely, unrecognizable errors must have crept into the text.

It is therefore not wise to place implicit faith in specific details of this record that are not verifiable by other means. Nor is it wise to assume, as some have done, that the document is a flawless record of the accomplishments of the command during this period. Yet precise conclusions have been based on this document, one group of which led directly to the establishment of Vérendrye National Monument, near present New Sanish, North Dakota. The monument has since been abolished, for recent historical criticism established that its justification was vulnerable on too many critical grounds.<sup>7</sup>

Before examining more closely the contents of this record of La Vérendrye's journey, we should review his knowledge of the region he was about to penetrate, and his objectives in making this expedition. For several years previous to his departure from Ft. La Reine in the fall of 1738, La Vérendrye had had reasonably accurate information,

from native sources, about the region and its inhabitants. From Cree and Assiniboin, and even from members of the sedentary western tribes themselves, he had heard of the character of the peoples he could expect to meet, and had even been told of Whites who occupied the lower reaches of the great River of the West.

Of the great western stream itself, La Vérendrye soon learned that it did not flow out of Lake Winnipeg, as he had at first been led to expect, but that it was part of a separate drainage system. That he should have been unaware of the relationship between the Missouri and the Mississippi, whose headwaters were in part known, is no cause for surprise. Information of this sort could only have been available in the Illinois country - but La Vérendrye never went in this direction.

La Vérendrye had previously believed that the great stream he was seeking flowed to the west, and hence must connect with a Sea of the West. By 1737, however, he had come to think that its general course was to the south, and hence (as was then conceived) into the Pacific Ocean. This re-orientation of the geographical problem was of considerable importance to him. Such a western river, if it flowed into the Pacific, could only lead toward Spanish settlements, and exploration in this quarter was no part of his plans, any more than toward Hudson Bay. Here is another clue to

the apparent lack of interest on the part of the La Vérendryes in trade southwestward from Ft. La Reine. The father and his party in 1738 pushed in that direction because he was obliged to do so. His two sons, four years later, went much further to the south and west, but there is no evidence that they carried on a vigorous trade in that direction at any time. These visits must soon have shown that trade with the village peoples of the upper Missouri was unlikely to produce beaver of a quality comparable to that from more northerly regions. The difficulties of transporting those they did obtain must also have loomed large in their thinking. And if southwestern exploration led but to the Spanish, the interest of traders would certainly cool. Yet such knowledge as this could scarcely be discussed in communications intended for the ear of the colonial minister, and is quite lacking in documents of the period.

It is not surprising that La Vérendrye's informants were not always consistent in their accounts of minor details about the westerners and their country. But there was a general truthfulness in their reports, based on actual contacts in trade and in war, which the French discovered during their visits. They had been told of sedentary, gardening peoples who lived in dwellings made of earth, and in fortified villages,



scattered along an important western stream - so unlike the shifting camps of the peoples of the woodland - and this is precisely what La Vérendrye found when he reached the upper Missouri River.

His informants made no false claims about the source of their knowledge of this region. They first spoke of their relations with these western peoples as having taken the form of military raids and child stealing - claims which have an undeniably authentic ring. But this hostile or semi-hostile relationship seemed to alternate with yet another: that of formal trade, seasonal in nature. This alternating pattern of trading and raiding seems to have been an old one, with roots deep in the prehistoric past.<sup>8</sup>

The Cree and Monsoni, like the Assiniboin, through La Vérendrye's own trade with them, had for a number of years been able to play the part of middlemen in trade between the French and more distant peoples. The interdependence between the Cree and Assiniboin on the one hand, and the village dwellers on the other, is clearly witnessed by the account of their trade. The new peoples welcomed the visits of the French. The Assiniboin, on the other hand, who were the actual agents of the contact of the French with the Missouri River peoples, probably tried

to delay advance in that direction for, if the French were to penetrate to the Missouri and establish themselves there in regular trade, Assiniboin interests would surely suffer. They probably knowingly contributed the varying counsel given the commandant about the western Indians, bearded White persons, the Spanish, and other matters.

What then can be said of La Vérendrye's immediate purposes in pushing beyond Ft. La Reine in the fall of 1738? From the outset, when he first took command of the Posts of the North more than ten years earlier, his duty to explore, and especially to discover a route to the Sea of the West, had been uppermost in importance, at least to the court. And progress in this direction, though frequently delayed, had nevertheless been made. A chain of posts now extended from Kamanistikwia to the Assiniboine River, all of them established and maintained by La Vérendrye's group. By any count this was a remarkable achievement. But the unknown had to be entered once more, and time was short. When La Vérendrye visited the east in 1737, Beauharnois had been forced to warn him that this was his last opportunity to fulfill the conditions of his commission. Beauharnois could only say that if he did not succeed it would be necessary to replace him. No longer could La Vérendrye put off this journey to the Sea of the West.

There is scant hint in surviving documents of plans and preparations for travel southwestward from Ft. La Reine. It cannot be doubted that La Vérendrye was now well aware of the important differences such travel would make in his arrangements. By the time he had reached Ft. La Reine, he must well have understood the true character of such long overland journeys. Accustomed to water transport, and moving men and goods and packs of furs over vast distances, he must still have hesitated over the new overland expedition. Long conversations must have been held with the Indians, accompanied by much debate over the problems now facing the French.

In recording the preparations for departure, mention was made of the fact that La Vérendrye issues shoes (souliers) to the men who were to accompany him, among other necessary articles distributed to them. The fur traders were men who wore moccasins, for this was the only footgear suited to the fragile birchbark canoe of the trade. The soft soled moccasins of the Indians of the Great Lakes region had been adopted by the very first settlers of New France. It is impossible to tell from the text of this account whether the shoes were leather ones of European origin, and which might have been brought from the east for the purpose, or the hard soled moccasins used by such Indians of the Plains as the Assiniboin, from whom they could have been obtained.

But the specific reference to footgear is direct evidence that La Vérendrye and his party were prepared for an ordeal of a new sort.

It is surprising that the long and trying journey to the River of the West should have been undertaken in October, so late in the season, though La Vérendrye seems at first to have intended to winter in the country of the Mantannes. The Indians perhaps minimized the hardships of the journey, and La Vérendrye later noted that it should have been possible to make the round trip in no more than forty days traveling time. We have little evidence of other details about which he must have inquired, and of which he was no doubt informed. He was soon to become aware of the character of the grassland prairies, where the lack of firewood could be remedied by using bois de vache (Buffalo chips); of the often great distances between sources of water; of the movements of game such as buffalo according to the season and the weather; and the like. The party was not only guided by the Indians from Ft. La Reine — from this point <sup>on</sup> they were completely dependent on them, even for their food. En route to the Missouri, the Assiniboin were following the buffalo in their fall hunt, according to ancient custom, and the French leader warned his men to carry as much food as they could. No longer could they

count on supplies carried in canoes or stored in caches; now their only commissary was on the<sup>ir</sup>Λ backs, or on the dog travois of the Indians, and this in addition to other necessary equipment.

It is hardly surprising that we lack information on the unnumbered day-to-day events of the trip, which must have been of concern at the time, but which were not preserved in an official letter. It is also understandable that such geographic information as is mentioned, and which might be of help in retracing the route of the party today, are referred to in the most casual manner. The recipient of the letter would scarcely be interested in the precise location or a description of such minor landmarks as the "first mountain," or the second, and nothing has survived that makes the identification of such landmarks more than reasonable guesses, taking into account all remarks on direction, distance, and speed. But even the latter are matters for speculation, since we do not know the means by which each was judged. There is reason to believe that the party had instruments with it for making careful observations, including the compass, astrolabe, and pocket watch. The astrolabe would have permitted the observation of latitude, taken at the first Mantanne village, presumably using Polaris. But even if the party used such instruments from time to time, we need to know the quality of the instruments themselves, not to mention the accuracy

of those using the instruments, and the accuracy of the record that has been preserved.

There are different kinds of evidence of the movements of the party contained in the record. There are, first, statements about direction, distance, and rate of travel, in an area under circumstances new to the explorers - statements which are subject to verification only in small measure. The route was also largely at the discretion of the Indian guides, whose purposes differed from those of the French. The trip was furthermore made on foot, with a mixed party including women and children, dog travois, and the like. Certain assumptions are of course possible which may help understand other direct statements. We may assume, for example, from the reference to a compass <sup>direction</sup> during the son's visit to the second Mantanne village, that he had such an instrument in hand, and that it had been used earlier while traveling overland, and was the authority for statements of direction. As for the rate of travel and estimates of distance, we are on less certain ground. Competence in judging such matters, by men unaccustomed to such travel, may well be questioned. But here, as elsewhere, means of verifying the statements are lacking, and the document must be used or rejected as it stands.

In a few instances it is possible to check the original against present day knowledge. Such instances are the points at which reference is made to topographic ~~features~~ or more permanent cultural features, such as the fortified villages of the Mantannes. But these, too, are largely problematical, for topographic features are sometimes given no more than casual mention. And the identification of the fortified villages is a special problem, involving ethnographic, archaeological, and linguistic considerations.

The statements of the record of 1738 and 1739, therefore, <sup>must</sup> ~~can only~~ be reviewed in the light of what has since become known of the area they visited. This is a major purpose of the present book, with the purpose of tracing as closely as possible the route followed and identifying, as precisely as practical, the places they reached. The judgements that have been made by historians and ethnographers are generally accurate, but some conclusions have been reached that are not acceptable when all of the evidence available today are considered, and should be rejected.

Leaving Ft. La Reine on October 18, 1738, the party reached, on the third day, a point estimated as being twenty-six leagues from the fort, by proceeding south by west. If the league is understood as representing three miles, the distance covered would be something more than

seventy-five miles, a very good speed for a mixed party afoot and engaged in hunting.<sup>9</sup>

Since the party consisted of nearly half Assiniboin, their course was not as direct as it might have been had the French been able to go directly to their objective. The route was frequently deflected from a direct one by the necessity of obtaining food, fuel, and water. The account therefore preserved accounts of hunting buffalo, which were seen in great numbers in the plains of what is now southwestern Manitoba.

We are thus afforded a means of estimating the speed La Vérendrye thought should have been possible. Using his twenty day estimate, we infer that a good rate of travel for a party on foot would have been six leagues, or about eighteen miles a day. Some historians (among them O. G. Libby) have greatly overestimated the speed attainable, probably because they simply forgot to take into account the fact that the party was in fact afoot.

The journey of 1738 was a traverse, and the region lacked prominent geographical features or reference points by which such a journey might be corrected or adjusted from time to time. There is also no evidence that a map was being made during the trip, and which would have required taking frequent observations, and which would permit criticism and revision, either at the time or later. Although



we do not know that a map was not actually made, it seems unlikely that anything more than the simplest record of estimated distance and direction was recorded in the field journals. The journey must have seemed at times to the French like an ocean voyage, with little beside the sun and stars for useful reference points.

A more delicate problem is that of reckoning the direction of travel. Reid has examined the matter of magnetic declination in 1738, assuming that recorded directions were based on the compass. He has shown that correction for declination is necessary to adjust recorded courses to modern maps.<sup>10</sup> This study, while not considered conclusive by Reid, shows that the route of the party can be made intelligible only by adjusting their courses in the light of present day (and somewhat inadequate) knowledge of magnetic declination. Yet previous studies of the route of the expedition ignore this fundamental matter.<sup>11</sup>

Related to the problem of the declination of the compass needle is that of properly interpreting the named compass points according to the wind rose, or the compass card used by the French. The fact that there are significant differences between French and English names for compass points has likewise been overlooked. Thus, <sup>the</sup> rendering of the first course given, sud quard <sup>i.e.,</sup> [quart] de sudouest, as "south by southwest," as has been done, is quite erroneous.<sup>12</sup>

The French term means, literally, "south one point southwest" or, as we would say today, "south by west." This error on the part of some translators makes a difference of eleven and one-quarter degrees in computations.<sup>13</sup> Other errors of this kind are in all other published translations of the document.

In addition to delays and variations from the intended course arising from the buffalo hunt, from the mixed character of the party, and from other factors, still another source of delay and variation soon becomes apparent. On the third day of the trip a group of forty Assiniboin families overtook them, desiring a council. This was but one of several such incidents affecting the journey. Though this particular band did not follow the French party, but remained in the vicinity of Ft. La Reine, time was lost. Later it became necessary to make a wide detour to visit an even larger encampment.

The party came to the "first mountain" at a distance of some seventy-five miles <sup>(twenty-six leagues)</sup> from their point of departure. There is but one natural feature within such a radius that seems to qualify as the elevation intended: the Pembina Mountain (or Mountains),<sup>14</sup> although other individuals have suggested differently. Libby, for example, suggested that it may have been Star Mound, near Snowflake, Manitoba,<sup>15</sup> but Reid has shown that such localized geographic features

can scarcely be identified with any conviction.<sup>16</sup>

The Pembina Mountains, however, are not a localized nature feature that can provide precision in reference. It is, in fact, a "mountain" only in local usage. Its technical description, the "Pembina Escarpment," more accurately indicates the nature of this upland feature, which is as much as eighty miles long. The Pembina Escarpment is, in turn, part of a larger topographic feature, the Manitoba Escarpment.<sup>17</sup>

It would obviously be unwarranted to pinpoint on a modern map a specific turning point as the landmark in the journal intended if, as is likely, this escarpment was in the region traversed. A number of conspicuous hills, often referred to as mountains or mounds - the latter term stemming from the frequent presence of burial mounds on them - are possible candidates for the landmark. Among these are Star Mound, or Nebogwawin Butte; Calf Mountain; Medicine or Signal Hill; and Pilot Mound Hill.<sup>18</sup> Two of these features have been suggested as being the "first mountain." Star Mound, an inconspicuous feature with local relief of fifty feet, was believed to be the "first mountain" by Libby. The other feature is Calf Mountain, a small hill rising slightly above the surrounding prairie southwest of the present town of Darlingford, Manitoba, and some fifteen miles northeast of Star Mound. Calf

Mountain is the site of a ten foot high Indian burial mound, probably built on a slight natural elevation.<sup>19</sup>

Calf Mountain and the immediate region around it appear to have some cultural significance, which may have a bearing on the problem of identifying La Vérendrye's "first mountain." Human and buffalo bones <sup>are</sup> said to have been found in early excavations at Calf Mountain. Its name itself is perhaps a translation of a native name, referring to the burial of both human and animal remains.<sup>20</sup> Other artificial mounds, containing associated human and buffalo burials, have been excavated by archaeologists along the valleys of the Red, Pembina, Souris, Sheyenne, and Missouri rivers, in both Canada and present North Dakota.<sup>21</sup> Places such as Calf Mountain may have been occasional stopping places, perhaps for ceremonial purposes. Such a stop may even have been made in 1738, though unrecorded.

Not far from the Calf Mountain burial mound is a large habitation site, where archaeological investigations have produced remains possibly related to those in the mound. This habitation site appears to be stratified, with prehistoric materials beneath those dating to historic times. It has been suggested that the prehistoric materials are the same as those in the Calf Mountain mound, and that "the early prehistoric Assiniboin formed a part of the village

population during a major part of its occupation.<sup>22</sup> Although Blackduck pottery, which is characteristic of the Manitoba Focus, has been found in the nearby field as part of the variety of archaeological materials there, the contents of the mound has recently been assigned to the Devils Lake-Sourisford Burial Complex.<sup>23</sup> This burial complex is attributed to the nomadic Sioux living in the Northwestern Plains about A.D. 700 to the early 1400s. Furthermore, the Blackduck pottery is no longer assigned to the Assiniboin.

There are two other major features in the area worthy of note, although they have not been suggested as a La Verendrye landmark. Medicine Hill or Signal Hill is a large hill northwest of Pelican Lake in the Pembina River valley. It is on the crest of one of the highest elevations in the Tiger Hills country, and is the location of large burial mounds.<sup>24</sup> Pilot Mound Hill, or Pilot Mound, as it is commonly known, is a well-known local landmark from which an extensive view of the surrounding plain can be noted.<sup>26</sup>

Still another matter deserves at least passing mention. The delta of the glacial Pembina River is a geographical feature of some importance. At the point where this river entered glacial Lake Agassiz, in present Pembina County, North Dakota, this delta forms a separate step-like feature, or terrace. The eroded east front of the delta, that is, forms a conspicuous bluff below the level of the escarpment

proper, and about five miles east of it. These two features, the delta bluff and the escarpment itself, have been mapped as "First Pembina Mountain" and as "Second Pembina Mountain."<sup>24</sup> There is a hint that, on naming these bluffs, topographers followed older local usage, and that names of features mentioned as early as 1738, though perhaps displaced, persisted until the time modern topographic maps were made. That is, these two terms may be translations of native names, rather than names first assigned by the French in 1738.

The estimated distance from the "first mountain" to the second one in the record of 1738 was twenty-four leagues; the direction, west by north. This distance and direction lead only to the Turtle Mountains, another geographic feature of this region, not unlike the Pembina Escarpment in being an extensive upland lacking real landmarks. Turtle Mountains provide a more commanding view in that it has a local relief of about 700 feet above the surrounding plain, and was a forested upland surrounded by grassland. It received its name from Indians, who saw this uplift area as being turtle-shaped. Those familiar with the terrain agree that this upland was probably the elevation referred to in the record at this point.<sup>27</sup>

The party had by now crossed part of the western basin of the Red River, and had climbed perhaps one thousand feet

in elevation. Their course had been erratic, for we read that in order to go two or three leagues in a straight line the party actually had to travel three or four. The march was fatiguing because of the constant necessity for ascending and descending hills and valleys many times daily. They comment on the magnificent plains, three to four leagues in extent, they crossed on the way.

The route is described even less precisely after leaving the "second mountain." Having already been delayed by the lengthening of the trip, and several stops, the party finally went as much as twenty-two leagues out of their way to visit a large encampment of the Assiniboin. There are no clues to the site of this camp, but some would have it that the detour was in a westerly direction, and that the distance recorded would have taken the party west across the loop of the Souris (Mouse) River.<sup>28</sup> There is, however, no evidence of the direction taken on this detour. There is, in fact, no mention of any stream - or valley - such as the Souris, or of any other body of water they crossed between the Assiniboine and the Missouri River. In view of the fact that it was now late October, and the season was a very dry one, they may have followed the course of the Souris River even though the stream is not mentioned. The opinion that they reached the far side of the Souris River loop is, however, pure speculation.

Having spent parts of two days at the large Assiniboin camp, they once more got under way, proceeding to a rendezvous with a party from the Mantannes. The Assiniboin had anticipated the approach to the Missouri by sending scouts ahead to arrange for such a meeting. From the large Assiniboin camp to this point required parts of eight days' travel to cover only seventeen leagues. If this distance is correct, a <sup>one</sup>~~partial~~ explanation for the slower pace may be the fact that the party was now enlarged by the addition of more than a hundred Indian families.

From the rendezvous with the emissaries of the Mantannes, the final leg of the journey seems to have been covered with better speed. Again the composition of the camp changed, and only the best walkers continued. By the evening of the third day of this march from the rendezvous, the party



reached a point some seven leagues from the first of the Mantanne fortified villages. They had crossed a region later to be called the Coteau des Prairies (Prairie highlands), and had entered the basin of the Missouri River.

Though the account makes but the briefest references to landmarks, it now becomes detailed in describing the ~~curious~~<sup>strange</sup> new peoples in the neighborhood of the great western river. Observations of these peoples and their customs, made at the first village reached, and at a second one nearby, are often specific, in spite of the brevity of their visit. It is not necessary here to closely examine these observations for their ethnographic significance, for an analysis of these accounts of the Mantannes has established the authentic character of this first account of these sedentary, agricultural, earth lodge village dwellers of the upper Missouri River.<sup>29</sup> Despite concurrence on the general importance of these ethnographic details, a number of problems have been raised that must be treated in detail. The most important of these is the issue raised by Libby concerning the identification of the people La Vérendrye knew as the Mantannes.

From the time historians first became aware of the achievements of the La Vérendryes in reaching the upper Missouri, it was assumed that the people referred to as the Mantannes (singular:~~form~~ Mantanne) were none other than the Mandan Indians, well known through later close contacts by a variety of explorers. The first modern account of the La Vérendryes, by the archivist Pierre Margry, identified these people as the Mandan.<sup>30</sup> Most historians have accepted this conclusion, which seems the obvious one.<sup>31</sup> Libby, however, has challenged this identification, asserting, on the basis of evidence he considered valid, that it was "extremely doubtful whether La Vérendrye ever saw the Mandans or came within a day's journey of them."<sup>32</sup> To anticipate a conclusion, the data and subsequent scholarship flatly do not support Libby's contention, the essence of which follows.

Libby asserted that the name Mantanne is foreign to the historic Mandan, who knew nothing of it, their own name for themselves being Nu-a-ta.<sup>33</sup> This <sup>^</sup> of course has no ← bearing on the problem, since the question is not what the Mandan may have called themselves, but what they were called by other people, specifically by the Cree and Assiniboin, La Vérendrye's informants.<sup>34</sup>

More serious problems are suggested by Libby's assertion that the description of the first village of the Mantannes visited by La Vérendrye "is clear evidence of its non-Mandan character."<sup>35</sup> He based this statement on two observations:

(1) There is no mention in the account of the central open plaza, with its Och-ta [sacred "canoe"] and ceremonial lodge; on the contrary, the record expressly states that all the streets, "squares" and huts resembled each other.

(2) No Mandan village has yet been found in a setting such as that described by the document — on a height in open prairie, with a ditch, and steps or posts — whereas, he asserts, the style of the village as described does fit the character of historic Hidatsa villages.<sup>36</sup>

In a later contribution, Libby developed his hypothesis that the Mantannes were the Hidatsa. He claimed that, despite the fact that the dwellings of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara — the three village tribes of the region — were "to all appearances exactly similar," the tribes "can be distinguished by the oldest form of house, the holy tepee [ceremonial lodge], which varies as the tribe varies, and also by the arrangement of tepees in their respective village sites and by the position of the doorways of the tepees."<sup>37</sup> Libby here uses the <sup>inappropriate</sup> Siouan form tepee, to designate any dwelling. Libby thus distinguishes three

criteria of ethnographic character: the form of the ceremonial lodge, the arrangement of dwellings within the village, and the orientation of their doorways. He fails to point out the dubious value of such information, for cultures do not remain static. The aboriginal cultures of these peoples may well have differed in these and in other respects, but each tribe was drastically modified during the early historic period by a variety of factors. As a consequence, they probably tended to become more alike through the intimate association into which they were thrown at the time. There is no question but that these peoples were greatly altered culturally between the time of La Vérendrye's visit and that of Lewis and Clark, and by the middle of the nineteenth century — when so many accounts of them were being produced — the native cultures had undergone change in virtually every sphere of life.

In a third article Libby further elaborated his hypothesis. Here he revealed that much of the authority for it had been derived from traditions of "native tribes actually living in the west, whose knowledge of their local geography and tribal life for the eighteenth century is as complete and exact as ours is vague and unscientific."<sup>34</sup> This value judgement on his part set the tone for all of his efforts in this matter. He preferred to rely on modern

native tradition, particularly that of the Hidatsa, for evidence concerning migrations and residence, and native culture, in preference to evidence from any other source, such as the account of the journey of 1738-1739. The choice of course is a personal one, but there has been little acceptance of Libby's conclusion by anthropologists and others intimately acquainted with the problem.

Libby was of the opinion that "not a particle of evidence" had been offered by those who, like Parkman, identified the Mantannes with the historic Mandan.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, he said, the Hidatsa are known to have "lived in Canada," and that one of their village sites had been identified as far north as Graham's Island, in Devils Lake. The Hidatsa, he said, had a "distinct tradition of southward migration" during the last half of the eighteenth century from this region to the Missouri, which they crossed and joined the Mandan. Libby claimed to have obtained information from the Hidatsa of the Fort Berthold *Indian* Reservation on the "exact location of this crossing." Both the Mandan and Hidatsa, he said, spoke of this event "as a matter of common knowledge." Libby thus <sup>asserts</sup> ~~able to find~~ that "An explorer from Canada, accordingly, traversing the country southwest of Turtle mountains toward the Missouri

river, would of necessity first come into contact with the Hidatsa tribe and would find them also on friendly terms with their nearest neighbors at the north, the Assiniboin." It is scarcely necessary to point out that the acceptance of <sup>oral</sup> tradition of native informants of the early part of the twentieth century, concerning matters relating to a time nearly two centuries earlier, is naive and historically unsound. Several specific claims based on such sources by Libby have been denied by competent scholars.<sup>40</sup>

Evidence contradicting the Hidatsa hypothesis of Libby is convincing. Will has shown, to begin with, that there is every reason to believe that the Mantannes were the the historic Mandan.<sup>41</sup> The word "Mandan" is clearly of Siouan origin, rather than Algonquian, as Libby supposed. There is no evidence that this term was ever specifically applied to the Hidatsa, and a concordance of native terms, from early documents, including maps, would <sup>probably</sup> demonstrate that the French form Mantanne is the exact equivalent of the English Mandan. The name Mandan is, in fact, known as early as the beginning of the British régime in the Missouri River region - about 1773. As early as 1757, furthermore, Bougainville recorded the name, in his French text, as Mandannes.<sup>42</sup> A denial that the French and English forms

are equivalent is uncritical; study of eighteenth century provincial French pronunciation and spelling would probably demonstrate that the sounds "t" and "d" were in many instances indistinguishable (constituting a linguistic phoneme), and that written symbols were interchangeable.

Libby's Hidatsa hypothesis entailed the identification of the two Indian groups living downriver, the Panoux (or Panana) and the Pananis. This he did by identifying these groups with the Mandan and Arikara, respectively. This identification was at once contradicted.<sup>43</sup> As Will aptly pointed out: "To those who can readily see that 'Panani' is not Pawnee, that 'des Missouriis' is not the Missouri, it may appear clear that 'Mantannes' are not Mandan and that 'Panana' are Mandan — but it might also be contended under the same theory that 'Assinipoels' could not be Assiniboin."<sup>44</sup>

Concerning the movement of the Hidatsa, and their traditional migration route, Will has shown that this tradition affords no clear account of their location prior to their residence in the vicinity of Devils Lake.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, no confirmation has yet been found for Hidatsa residence in the Devil's Lake region from archaeological studies. Even this part of the traditional migration ~~be laid~~<sup>is</sup> open to question. Finally, according to Libby's

own evidence, the Hidatsa did not leave the Devils Lake region until the latter half of the eighteenth century — yet he locates them on the Missouri, near the mouth of Little Knife River, as early as the first half of the century! Will observes that both findings are probably in error.<sup>46</sup>

Will points out, on the other hand, that there are elaborate accounts in both the Mandan and Hidatsa traditions of the arrival of the latter on the Missouri at the mouth of the Heart River, and both peoples assert that the Hidatsa first learned to cultivate the soil there.<sup>47</sup> Will is of the opinion that the Hidatsa were living near the Mandan, and not far from the Heart River, in 1738. La Vérendrye, lacking an interpreter and dependent on signs for communication, he says, merely failed to hear of them. He also notes that the names Mantannes, Panana, and Panani were doubtless all Siouan words, inasmuch as the informants were either Assiniboin or Mandan, and therefore of Siouan speech.<sup>48</sup>

Libby believed that the earth lodge village visited by La Vérendrye was in the vicinity of the Little Knife River, based on the observation of latitude taken by the son at that village, and which he recorded as  $48^{\circ}12'$ . No other direct evidence supports the Hidatsa as having lived in this location at the time. The recorded figures may well



have been carelessly transcribed in the manuscript, or the instrument - presumably an astrolabe - may not have been accurate.<sup>49</sup> Nor do we know the degree of skill with which La Vérendrye's son used the instrument, so it would be unwise to accept the recorded observation as precise and final evidence. Libby, nevertheless, goes so far as to say that those who refuse to accept the observation fail to explain why La Vérendrye "could not perform the relatively simple task of ascertaining the correct latitude . . ."<sup>50</sup> This remark is startlingly naive.

Other students have commented on the difficulty of accepting this observation of latitude. Upham - himself a <sup>competent</sup> surveyor - remarked that the observation, or the record, "was most surely erroneous, exceeding the true latitude by nearly one degree," and had no difficulty in making such a correction, in the belief that the Mantannes were the historic Mandan.<sup>51</sup> Other western historians, familiar with the ground, such as DeLand and Robinson, also assume that the Mantannes were in the Heart River region - thus, by implication, rejecting the recorded observation.<sup>52</sup>

As for the matter of the distinctive arrangement of Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara earth lodge villages, upon which Libby laid such stress, Will agreed that the Hidatsa earth

village, from historic accounts and surveys of known Hidatsa village sites, was indeed without order, or anything to which La Vérendrye might have referred as streets, or as open places. Mandan villages, on the other hand, he said, had at least one large open space, with a ceremonial lodge, slightly different from the other lodges, at one side of this space, standing between two other lodges of the usual sort, and forming part of the circle of dwellings around this open area. Libby asserted that La Vérendrye could not have failed to see and report on this ceremonial lodge, had he actually visited a Mandan village. Yet later visitors, among the<sup>m</sup> Alexander Henry the younger and Lewis and Clark, likewise failed to give an account of such a feature.<sup>53</sup>

The omission of a reference to the ceremonial lodge then does not mean that La Vérendrye did not see such a feature, so characteristic of the Mandan village; mention of corn- and meat-drying scaffolds, equally conspicuous in all historic earth lodge villages, is also missing.<sup>54</sup> There are other notable features that might be expected to have attracted attention: one might, for example, imagine that the disposition of the dead on scaffolds outside the villages would have elicited some comment from La Vérendrye.

It should be clear that Libby placed great reliance on observations made well after the time of La Vérendrye's

visit. It is obvious that ethnographic data, even those from twentieth century sources, are useful, particularly when they are verifiable by reference to other data — but the emphasis on these selected observations by Libby frequently tortures or contradicts reliable collateral evidence.

Archaeological field work, for instance, provides no support for Libby's hypothesis. A great deal of such work was carried out by the State Historical Society of North Dakota, and by the Smithsonian Institution, before Garrison Dam was built, and before most of the region in *North Dakota* upstream from the mouth of the Knife River was flooded by Lake Sakakawea. Although a large number of archaeological sites were recorded by survey teams above Garrison Dam, only a few of them are relevant to the problem at hand. Most such sites are prehistoric camp sites or burial mounds; earth lodge villages are notable for their rarity, since they are so common below the mouth of the Knife River. One of these sites (Grandmother's Lodge) is prehistoric, and the others were historic sites occupied by refugee groups of Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara many decades after the time of La Vérendrye's visit to the Missouri country.<sup>55</sup>

One curious site in this area, investigated by Thad. C. Hecker in 1938, has a number of features that necessitate

brief mention here. This site, on White Earth River several miles north of the Missouri valley, and called the White Earth Creek site, consisted of a fortified enclosure of about 1.2 acres. There appeared to be no surface indications of houses within the curvilinear ditch, which was reinforced by four bastions and a line of palisade posts within the ditch. Since the artifacts from the site have not yet been described, it is impossible to comment on the identity of its builders except to say that it may be prehistoric, since no Euro-American trade goods seem to have been found.<sup>56</sup>

A number of features lead to its comparison with the first Mantanne fort: (1) the fact that it is several miles from the Missouri River, (2) it is on a hill, and is fortified by a ditch, and (3) the fortifications are augmented by four bastions. Since, however, the fortified area is only 1.2 acres - and contained no obvious evidence for dwellings such as characterize village sites along the Missouri River - the comparison with the village of one hundred and thirty houses of the first Mantanne fort is not very convincing, especially in view of its location so far from the mouth of the Heart River.

In any case, the mouth of the Knife River marks the northwesternmost effective limit for native village dwellers along the Missouri River prior to White contact. Garrison

Reservoir has in fact been referred to as "the northern periphery of the Upper Missouri culture area."<sup>57</sup> It is therefore extremely unlikely that any support for Libby's hypothesis will be found in this area in the future, for the requisite villages neighboring the Mantanne fort simply are not to be found in the neighborhood.

Any hypothesis of northerly origins for any of the earth lodge cultures of the upper Missouri River must take into account, as Libby does not, a point made long ago by George Will: that at the time of first contacts with the French, the northern limit of agriculture was probably the Knife River.<sup>58</sup> Only later, and "largely as a result of enforced migrations," was the area occupied extended very far above the mouth of that river.

Libby had located the first village of the Mantannes as west of the Mouse or Souris River. We have already seen that a location west of the Souris is not supported by any reliable evidence, but the assertion was necessary for his hypothesis. We can only be sure that the first Mantanne village was within a day's march of the second, on the Missouri River, from the fact that the party consisting of the Chevalier, the Sieur Nolan, and some engagés and Indians, needed only parts of two days to complete the trip.<sup>59</sup>

Libby contended that the party had traveled as much

as twenty-five to forty miles a day, overlooking the fact that they had to have time to indulge in the numerous feasts to which they were treated at the second village. He concluded, in any case, that the party had reached the site of a "very large and very old Hidatsa winter village" about thirty miles south of latitude  $48^{\circ}12'$ , and near the mouth of Shell Creek, on the north side of the Missouri.<sup>60</sup> He later abandoned this locality in favor of another site even further up the Missouri, which he called "Old Crossing."

Some of Libby's conclusions <sup>stem from</sup> ~~arose in consequence of~~ his insistence on the highly questionable observation of latitude. Having begun by accepting this statement literally, he found it necessary to adjust and fit such data as could be found to it, and to tailor the data to suit his needs. Dixon, in an able rebuttal to Libby, pointed out a number of his errors.

Libby had taken the distance from the Assiniboin camp to the first village of the Mantannes to be some fifty miles, but Dixon showed that after three days' travel from the rendezvous with the Mantannes, the party was still seven leagues from the first village. Since Libby assumed that an average day's march was twenty-five to forty miles - which is surely too high - three days of travel would have

covered a distance of seventy-five to one hundred and twenty miles. This distance, added to fifty (the distance of the rendezvous from the Assiniboin encampment) and twenty (before the Mantanne village could be reached) places the first village not fifty, but one hundred and forty-five to one hundred and ninety miles from the Assiniboin camp. Even if, as Libby believed, the Assiniboin were near the present international border, the distance is too great to fit his theory. It is, however, the approximate distance from the international border to the mouth of the Heart River. Further, but indirect, evidence of the distance between the Assiniboin camp and the Mantannes is the fact that La Vérendrye took eleven days to return to that camp; since he was ill at this time, he would have traveled slowly, but scarcely so slowly as to make only fifty miles in eleven days.<sup>61</sup>

Dixon was unable to accept the suggestion that the earth lodge peoples visited by La Vérendrye lived so far from the traditional Heart River location. The observation of latitude seems to him to favor Libby's location of the Mantannes but, as Dixon remarked, errors of observation were to be expected in determinations of this period. Even though errors of a degree were not unknown, Dixon

did not feel it was justifiable to explain the matter in this way. Furthermore, to accept the northerly location for either a Mandan or a Hidatsa village conflicted with "accessible evidence and tradition."<sup>62</sup>

In 1916, in a reiteration of his hypothesis, Libby announced the identification of a new "site" as that of the village on the Missouri River visited by La Vérendrye's son in 1738.<sup>63</sup> This site, he said, was that of an old Hidatsa village on the east bank of the Missouri River, in present McLean County, one mile south of the mouth of the Little Knife River — and more than one hundred and eighty miles above Bismarck. ^ This site had, however, "washed into the river," but that it was "well known locally," having been visited for many years earlier by both Indians and Whites. The old garden and burial places, he said, could still be pointed out. This locality, he asserted, was known as "Old Crossing."

At this point the Missouri makes a southwesterly detour of several miles, past the front of this old village "site." Libby's informants probably were early twentieth century Hidatsa and certain White residents in the area. It is not necessary to examine in detail the basis for his claims that this lost "site" was that of the village of 1738. They have been examined and rejected by Will.<sup>64</sup>



It is worth noting that the name "Old Crossing" does not appear in historical literature before 1916, when it was first used by Libby.<sup>65</sup>

Libby's claim of positive identification of the long sought site of 1738 was therefore not document<sup>e</sup>d, either then or later. There is no hint, for example, that he had found the requisite number of associated earth lodge village sites nearby. Libby and his assistant, Herbert C. Fish, searched in vain for surviving sites in the region.<sup>66</sup> Any identification of course requires the discovery of not just one site, but of a group of villages. Whereas one could credit the partial or total loss of one (or of several) sites to the Missouri, the loss of all of them strains belief.<sup>67</sup> Furthe<sup>r</sup>more, the smaller first village, away from the river, has not been found. In view of the nature of the documentation, and its rejection by serious and competent students of the problem, <sup>it is curious</sup> that some general reference works of wide circulation still present the Libby hypothesis as accurate and accepted.<sup>68</sup>

The problem of the identity of the Mantannes, first raised by Libby, still remains. Although his Hidatsa hypothesis is not satisfactory, there is room for doubt that the group La Vérendrye called the Mantannes is the exact equivalent of the historic Mandan. Some of the

later visitors to the upper Missouri referred to the earth lodge peoples of the area, or to their location, by the name of the most prominent (to them) group. This meant that other groups of independent importance - such as the Hidatsa, and even the Caddoan-speaking Arikara - were included in the term "Mandan." It is entirely possible that the same is true of the reference to the Mantannes in 1738, so that the term may have included more than the Mandan proper.

Another archaeological site, near Bismarck, must now be considered in view of the controversies opened by Libby concerning the location of the first Mantanne village. This is a village site on Apple Creek, a small tributary of the Missouri, which flows into the main stream from the east and a little below the mouth of the Heart River.<sup>69</sup> The village was acquired by the State of North Dakota and established February 1, 1937, as Menoken Indian Village State Park, under the supervision of the State Historical Society. The park is on the south bank of the creek some twelve miles east of Bismarck: it was named for the neighboring modern community of Menoken; the name is not of Indian origin.

Personnel from the State Historical Society, among others, have studied this site and information from it

for its relevance to the La Vérendrye visit in 1738.<sup>70</sup> The site is distinctive in being a village located away from the Missouri valley, east of the stream, yet within "a day's journey" of the historic earth lodge villages near the mouth of the Heart River. Menoken is on a terrace above the heavily wooded creek bottoms, and affords a clear view across the bottomlands toward the north and northeast, of several butte-like elevations back from the creek, well in accordance with the account of the first Mantanne fort. Remains of the ditch surrounding the village away from the creek bank, and paralleled by an interior earthwork preserving the remains of four large bastions, are still readily visible.

Preliminary excavations at Menoken were made in 1938 by Thad. Hecker.<sup>71</sup> The work explored the ditch and interior earthwork, and provided some information on dwellings through the clearing of one of the lodge sites. Hecker was of the opinion that it was a village of the historic Mandan, of an age appropriate to have been visited by La Vérendrye; furthermore, he correctly points out that the only region in which several earth lodge villages of the appropriate age have been found was at the mouth of the Heart River, which is within the distance from Menoken required by the account of 1738. A summary

of the work at this site by Will and Hecker also assigns the site to the time of La Vérendrye.<sup>72</sup>

Later students, like Will and Hecker, agree that the Menoken site is in an appropriate location with respect to the Heart River villages of the Mandan, and that there is (as yet) no other candidate in the area for the first Mantanne village. Furthermore, the necessary earth lodge villages in the vicinity of "Old Crossing" simply do not exist, so that there is clearly a consensus that La Vérendrye visited the vicinity of the Heart River.

Nevertheless, Menoken's case is far from secure. Like the first village, it is fortified, has four bastions, and is apparently in an appropriate location, but there are a number of discrepancies that cast doubt on its identity as the village of 1738. First, it is far too small to be reliably identified as the village of one hundred and thirty houses that La Vérendrye visited. Since the fortified part of the site contains only three acres, there is no possibility that this number of houses could have been built in the fortified area, even given the possibility that some of the site has been removed by erosion. Some of the houses at Menoken are outside the ditch, but even considering this fact, the site scarcely approaches half the magnitude of the one described

by La Vérendrye. There are still other features at Menoken which do not agree with the 1738 village description: for example, the ditch at Menoken is only five feet deep, not fifteen; and Hecker found no cache pits during his work there, whereas La Vérendrye commented on their large numbers in the village he visited.

Most local students familiar with the problem would probably agree with the conclusions, as we do, of James E. Sperry, Superintendent of the State Historical Society of North Dakota. He feels "not only that there is too little information from excavation of the site to identify it properly, but also that existing archeological survey coverage away from the main stream is inadequate to allow reasonable discussion of potential sites." Contrary to Will and Hecker's opinions, his inspection of the material from Menoken suggests that the site is too early to have been visited by La Vérendrye. In short, the site's identity as the first Mantanne village is not supported by the cursory archaeological work that has been done at the site to date. In fact, he suspects that "the blanket of cultural material over and well outside the fortification ditch represents a somewhat different and later occupation." He concludes that the case for Menoken is open, but that its identification as the one La Vérendrye visited is not justified by the available archaeological data, in spite

of the fact that he believes that La Verendrye's journey carried him to some point not far from the mouth of the Heart River.<sup>73</sup>

Although the probability that Menoken may be the first Mantanne village is very low, it is obvious that the valley of Apple Creek deserves far more attention than it has had to date. Although there is some traditional and documentary evidence for Mandan villages near the mouth of the stream,<sup>74</sup> the rest of its course is all but unknown to archaeologists.

~~of the fact that he believes that La Vérendrye's journey  
carried him to some point not far from the mouth of the  
Heart River.~~ 69

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La Vérendrye seems to have made no extravagant claims of discoveries during his journey in 1738-1739, nor did he pretend to knowledge that he did not possess. It is true that his letter concludes with the statement that he had discovered (as he believed) a river flowing toward the west. Unlike other streams of which he was aware, it did not drain toward Hudson Bay to the northeast. But he did not claim that this was the long sought River of the West, nor that it led to the Sea of the West. He merely said that he would obtain more complete information about it.

In spite of the problems raised by his account, it must be regarded as a restrained and essentially truthful record of observations he actually made in the field, remarkably uncluttered with inferences based on those observations. There is an element of surprise in the

record of what he saw at the first Mantanne village; it is probably because the fortifications, which he had never seen before, and the new houses and customs of the Mantannes were new and strange to him. In none of his account, however, is there any hint that he exaggerated or intentionally misrepresented any of the novel things he saw among these people.

His achievement in reaching the Missouri River, a goal the La Vérendryes had been seeking for more than a decade, is passed over in the surviving account with scarcely a comment. It seems certain that they now realized that the Missouri, important as it was, would not lead them to a Sea of the West. And, in reporting to his superiors, it would not do to infer that he had failed: La Vérendrye did not claim the discovery of the long <sup>o</sup>sought waterway, nevertheless, for now he knew better.

La Vérendrye concluded his account with reserve. He could probably imagine the frowns that would cross certain faces, but he could not claim what he did not believe. But it was unlikely that even Maurepas would appreciate the great step in geographical knowledge that had been taken under his direction, and which reflected great credit on the throne of Louis XV. The western commandant, however well he understood the importance of what he had done,



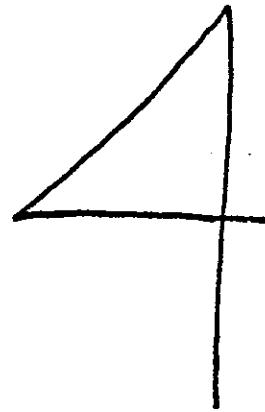
could scarcely make such persons understand. There was tragic irony in his predicament.

His disallusionment was heightened by the lack of furs on the plains. In penetrating to the Missouri valley, La Vérendrye had passed well beyond the margin of the eastern woodlands. Beaver and other fur bearers were, of course, to be found on the plains and along its watercourses. The quality of these western fur bearers was probably less fine, and their numbers far less than those of the lakes and streams to the east. Conversely, the buffalo, probably never more than rare strays in the woodlands, on the prairies took the place in native economy of the smaller fur bearers elsewhere. The dependence of the Assiniboin on the buffalo, as shown in La Vérendrye's account and in so many others, also characterized the economies of the village-dwelling Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara, in spite of their heavy reliance on their gardens. In any event, the role of the smaller fur bearers in the northern Plains was clearly a relatively minor one.

These facts have a bearing on the policies and acts of La Vérendrye in the years after 1738. The Assiniboin and Cree had disappointed him with their lack of concern over supplying the pelts needed in the trade. It seems likely that La Vérendrye did not immediately comprehend

the full significance of the dependence of the Assiniboin on the buffalo. Once out on the prairies with them, on the long trek to the Missouri, he must have been led to a far clearer understanding of the fact that far fewer pelts were available in these new settings.

It is not hard to believe that La Vérendrye was disappointed and half-hearted about pursuing the explorations of 1738-1739. It is true that his sons returned to the region, and even went far beyond the Missouri, but the father did not. He must have foreseen the impossibility of trade, at least of the kind he knew and sought, in this direction. The establishment of posts, or at least of profitable trade in return for pelts, was the sole means by which the old search for a Sea of the West could be maintained, since the King himself would provide no other. Is it to be wondered that La Vérendrye seems himself to have been satisfied with but one visit to the mighty Missouri, or that almost at once he turned his eyes in other directions - toward the valley of the Saskatchewan, for example, a likelier prospect for the "better beaver" of the North?



## THE YEARS 1739 - 1742

The mysterious River of the West had at last been reached. More than seven years had elapsed since the summer of 1731, when the first steps were taken in this direction - steps that were frequently difficult, sometimes dangerous, and in one instance, tragic. Yet the accomplishments of these years could not have been properly evaluated at Versailles. Even had the court properly appreciated the vast distances yet to be covered before a sea of the west could be reached, it would scarcely have given the explorer due credit for the <sup>arduous</sup> work he had completed to date.

As for La Vérendrye, one wonders whether even he was aware of how far he yet was from his ultimate objective. It was many leagues from Quebec to the upper Missouri, but as great a distance yet remained to the Pacific, over regions even more difficult to cross. Did La Vérendrye really appreciate the true character of the geographic problems, and the real nature of the assignment he had

requested so many years ago? Now he was aware, from first-hand experience, of the character of the prairies and the great Plains, beyond the familiar woods and waters of the canoe lands. He must have privately felt some misgivings about his task. But of private thoughts there is little hint in the surviving sources. Before the governor he spoke with due pride of his accomplishments so far, rather than of the hazards of the future.

The record of the explorations of 1738 and 1739 concluded with a statement about the River of the West, and the fact that it flowed to the west. La Vérendrye chose to call attention to the possibility of further exploration by water, probably in the belief that he had entered a different drainage basin by crossing the "height of land" of which there had been so frequent mention in earlier maps and documents. He could as yet hardly have foreseen that the true continental divide was of a quite different character from the almost imperceptible height of land separating waters draining to the St. Lawrence from those draining to Hudson Bay.

Had the ministry cared to weigh the accomplishments of La Vérendrye and his assistants fairly, they might have noted that not only had the group established a new base of operations far beyond Lake of the Woods, and had

explored in a wholly new direction, to the southwest, but had reached an obviously important waterway, the River of the West itself. They had also begun to probe in other directions. From Ft. La Reine La Vérendrye, in April 1739, had sent his son the Chevalier in the direction of another vast inland lake, to which they were now close. This was Lake Winnipeg, which the Chevalier was to explore, and to inform himself of streams flowing into it, especially <sup>of</sup> the one called the Rivière Blanche, or the great Saskatchewan.

La Vérendrye seems to have intended himself to go in the direction of Lake Winnipeg when his canoes returned with supplies in the fall. But his plans soon changed, for we find him going then to Michilimackinac instead. The Saskatchewan attracted his attention at this time because of reports of "mines" in its vicinity. These reports must have been very vague, for the Chevalier was to "make a circuit of the lake." This would of course have required not weeks, but months. But the real reason for probing in this direction is suggested by the remark that the Chevalier was "to try to prevent the Indians going to the English," by making them hope that La Vérendrye would go to them in person in the near future.

But his affairs at this juncture were being oriented in a different direction, for once more the troublesome matter of finances arose to plague him. When he reached Michilimackinac some time during the summer, his furs were seized. In May of 1738 La Vérendrye had contracted an obligation to the Sieur de Lorme for more than six thousand livres, for merchandise for his explorations and commerce. This debt was to be paid in August of 1739, or earlier. But the merchant had misgivings about the loan, for as early as June he obtained permission to seize the commandant's peltries, which he did not hesitate to use.<sup>1</sup> At this point, however, we must turn our attention to other matters affecting La Vérendrye's life.

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Two of La Vérendrye's men, as has been seen, had been left in the Mantanne village on his departure for Ft. La Reine in December, 1738. They were to learn the new language, and when their knowledge of it should permit, to gather all possible information on the country. These two men remained among the Mantannes for more than eight months, returning to Ft. La Reine in September.<sup>2</sup>

The two Frenchmen had done a conscientious job, and they furnished a great deal of information in addition to that obtained by La Vérendrye during his <sup>own</sup> brief visit. They found, for example, that at the beginning of June, representatives of several nations came every year to the great villages of the Mantannes, on the banks of the Missouri River. These people came on horses to trade with the Mantannes, bringing dressed hides, trimmed and ornamented with feathers and porcupine quills, and painted in various colors. They also brought white buffalo robes to trade. From the account it is clear that these visiting tribes were typical Plains Indians, now beginning to profit from their possession of horses and, no doubt, firearms. In exchange, the Mantannes traded corn and beans, of which they had an ample supply.

In the spring of 1739, the two men reported, some two hundred families of these visitors arrived, and even more had been present on other occasions. These visitors were of several different tribes. One such people were said to have come from the direction of the setting sun, where there were said to be White men who lived in towns and in forts of brick and white stone. Learning of the presence of Frenchmen among the Mantannes, the visitors welcomed them. So the French went to see them, on the opposite side of the Missouri River. In one of the houses they found a

man of great reputation among these western folk, who spoke the language of the distant White people. Because the two Frenchmen did not understand him in this language - perhaps corrupt Spanish - the visitor used the language of the Mantannes, telling them that he had been raised from childhood among the Whites. This man visited the two Frenchmen several times, and seemed quite friendly toward them.

He said that the White persons among whom he had grown up were very pleasant people, adding that he would be happy to guide the two to see them, and assuring them that they would be well received. He had horses to transport them, and it would be possible to reach their destination before cold weather set in. It was, however, a great distance, since they would have to make a great detour to avoid a numerous people, the Gens du Serpent (People of the Snake). Most of these people, he said, lived in forts, but the rest were nomadic, and occupied a very large territory. We need not believe that he had very detailed knowledge of these Gens du Serpent, or indeed that they were in fact one people. The Frenchmen probably also misunderstood his reference to their villages as "forts," since only the village peoples along the Missouri River had fortified villages comparable to those of the Mantannes.



These Gens du Serpent, we learn, were enemies of the White people of the west, and were a brave people, dreaded even by other native tribes. Yet there was no reason to fear meeting them on the journey to visit the White people, because a route would be followed to avoid them. The two Frenchmen, however, declined the man's offer. They had traded all their goods with the Mantannes and, in any event, could not undertake such a journey without notifying their commandant.

The visiting chief gave convincing evidence of the truth of his claims of having lived among the White peoples to the west. He described them as white, like the French, and they wore beards. They prayed to the "great master of life" in books, which he described as being made of corn leaves. Holding these books, they were accustomed to sing in great houses, where they assembled for prayer. The Frenchmen said that the chief frequently mentioned the names of Jesus and Mary, and he showed them a cross which he had worn around his neck since birth. He described their houses as being made of bricks, and receiving light from above - as indeed Spanish missions did.

Of Spanish towns and forts, the chief said that they were surrounded by good walls and wide ditches filled with

water, and had drawbridges, gates of iron, and ramparts. The Whites used powder, cannon, guns, axes, and knives, the latter of which they traded to the Indians. They grew all kinds of grain, plowing the land using horses and oxen. The chief showed them a coverlet and a shirt of cotton. The coverlet was embroidered at the edges with silk and colored wool<sup>en</sup> yarn. The shirts were not pleated at the wrist - as were French garments - and coat sleeves were embroidered, as were the shoulders, in various colors. These he had obtained from the Whites. The two Frenchmen would have obtained some of these garments to carry back to La Vérendrye had they not exhausted their stock in trade in previous transactions.

The chief went on to remark that Spanish women were white and handsome, wearing their hair in a coil, and earrings of brilliant stones, as well as bracelets and necklaces of a light yellow color. By means of gestures, he showed the two Frenchmen how these Whites played upon the harpsichord and bass viol.

The Spanish, it appeared, were often at war with the Gens du Serpent. They marched in columns, the men wearing armor of chain mail. The chief showed them a Spanish bridle, the bit and curb of which were of one piece, and having long brances<sup>h</sup>, all of it being well polished.

Saddles and stirrups were the same as those of the French, who were told that the Whites used pistols and saddle cloths (blankets).

The Spanish towns, the Frenchmen heard, were near "the great Lake," the water of which rose and fell, and was not good to drink. The country in which they lived was one of very high mountains. Near the White people there were also black men who wore beards and wrought iron; it was necessary to pass these blacks before one could reach the White settlements. There was no fear of starving along the way, for animals of all kinds were to be found everywhere, particularly buffalo and deer. Having thus offered to guide the two Frenchmen to Spanish lands, he also expressed a desire to return with them to see the country of the French.

The tribes who came to trade with the Mantannes remained among them for more than a month. They frequently visited the villages, the men learned, and whenever they did so there was great rejoicing on both sides. In the account which has been preserved — though but an extract of the original record — we catch a glimpse of the expanding intertribal trade that followed the acquisition of horses from the Spanish. It is one of the clearest such accounts available, and sheds light not only upon the history of

their neighbors, but of the Mantannes as well. A first dim record of the relations between the Spanish and the native Indians of the Plains is recorded in this account. Had the ministry at Versailles the wit to read these accounts with understanding, they might have thanked La Vérendrye for obtaining information of such value to them. We know that the commandant was impressed by the importance of the information his men had obtained, for the extract mentioned also records that he had given orders to one of his sons to proceed with four men and an interpreter to the Mantannes.

It is unlikely that La Verendrye expected his son to set off at once in the fall of 1739 but, whatever the expectations, Pierre, the son, did not actually leave for the Missouri River country until early 1741. More than a year and a half was therefore to intervene between the two major contacts with the Mantannes. We know nothing of independent contacts that may have been made, by La Vérendrye's men or by those of La Marque or others, during this time.

La Vérendrye himself spent the winter of 1739 and 1740 at Michilimackinac, and in the spring of 1740 he returned to Montreal for the first time since the summer of 1737. In the summer of 1740 he again returned as far as Michilimackinac, but he spent the winter of 1740 and 1741 at his home in the east - his first such visit there for

many years. When he set out for the west again in the spring of 1741, he was accompanied by Father Claude Coquart, the first Jesuit to take part in the activities of the western command since Aulneau's death, five years earlier. It is regrettable that no cleric took part in the first explorations toward the Missouri; had this been the case we should doubtless have more details of the new peoples. But even in 1741 Father Coquart went no further west with the commandant than Michilimackinac.

Years later, Coquart wrote that during the summer of 1741 he had accompanied a young French officer - by whom he probably means one of La Vérendrye's sons - in a search for the western sea.<sup>3</sup> We know that Pierre and another son, in April of 1741, left Ft. La Reine to go to the villages of the Mantannes, and the claim <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ made that he descended the great River of the West to a point "not far from two Spanish forts."<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, nothing is known of the events of this trip, and we have only his word that it took place. In any event, it is unlikely that Coquart was a member of the party of 1741; had he accompanied it, all record of the fact could scarcely have been lost.

In October, 1741, La Vérendrye once more returned to Ft. La Reine, from which he had been absent for at least

two years. The winter was doubtless spent in consultation and planning between the commandant and Pierre, for by now Pierre was filling his father's shoes in his absence. In the fall of 1741, probably, he had built two new trading posts, one on the shores of Lake Winnipegosis and another on Cedar Lake. The first was named Fort Dauphin (the first of this name), and the second was called Fort Bourbon.<sup>5</sup> These posts were reaching ever nearer Hudson Bay and the English, and much light will surely become available when the records of the Hudson's Bay Company for the period are published, for the English surely kept the French under close scrutiny.

During La Vérendrye's visit to Montreal and Quebec Beauharnois had again warned him that he must carry the matter of the discovery of the Sea of the West to a successful conclusion. The governor warned La Vérendrye that if he returned to Montreal once more without having achieved this goal, he would not be allowed to go out again, or his sons in his place.<sup>6</sup> This official letter sounds as though the governor were being harsh with La Vérendrye, as he undoubtedly intended to make it sound. But in private the governor must have been more reasonable with him. Beauharnois could obviously not excuse his subordinate, and he must have reminded the commandant

of the ministry's stubborn adherence to the original plan of discovery. Whatever took place in the east, when La Vérendrye returned to Ft. La Reine in October, 1741, he again began preparations for an expedition to the southwest, rather than to the northwest, which must have seemed to him more promising.

For this expedition, he chose François and Louis-Joseph, who were to be the first French to penetrate beyond the upper Missouri River. These men, with the two engages who accompanied them, pushed deeper into the northern Plains in what is now the United States than any other explorers of New France. They were absent on this journey for more than a year, facing a variety of unknown terrors, hundreds of miles from the now familiar country of the Posts of the North.

5

## EXPLORATIONS OF 1742 - 1743 BEYOND THE MISSOURI RIVER

Our knowledge of the explorations of the two La Vérendrye brothers in 1742 and 1743 is based on documents preserved in Paris. The most important of these documents is a letter from the Chevalier de la Vérendrye to Beauharnois, unfortunately lacking a place or date. A translation of this letter follows. Like the account of the journey of 1738 and 1739, this letter is headed "Journal."

This document is preserved in a draft now in the Archives de la Service Hydrographique. It was first published by Margry, who used it in 1852 in preparing his account of the La Vérendrye family.<sup>1</sup> It is not, however, clear whether the draft now in the Service Hydrographique is the one he published in 1886.<sup>2</sup> Since the published text covers the period from April 29, 1742, to July 2, 1743, it is probable that there actually are - or were - two drafts.



Without handling both it would be impossible to determine which text is to be preferred. Probably neither of them, in any case, is the autograph copy of the Chevalier; the original letter was doubtless copied in Quebec for transmittal to Paris.

The translation is based on the published texts of Margry and Burpee,<sup>3</sup> both, presumably, from the same original draft. Other translations have also been consulted.<sup>4</sup> As with the letter journal of 1738 and 1739, the text is rendered literally, and divided into paragraphs in keeping with custom.

\* \* \* \* \*

Journal of the expedition [April 29, 1742, to July 2, 1743], of the Chevalier de la Vérendrye and one of his brothers to reach the Sea of the West, addressed to M. the Marquis de Beauharnois.

Monsieur,

I take the liberty of submitting to you an account of the journey I made with one of my brothers and two Frenchmen,

sent by my father, honored with your orders to proceed to the discovery of the Sea of the West, by way of the Mantanes, following information from the Indians (suivant le rapport des Sauvages).

We left Fort La Reine April 29th [1742] and arrived among the Mantanes May 19th. We remained there until July 23d, awaiting the Gens des Chevaux [Horse People], whom we were led to expect daily. Seeing that the season was advancing, and being determined not to relax our efforts, I sought among the Mantanes for two men to guide us to the country of the Gens des Chevaux, in the hope of finding some village near the mountain (la montagne) or along our way. Two very willingly offered. We did not hesitate a moment to leave. We traveled twenty days west-southwest, which did not promise well for our route. We encountered no one, but plenty of wild animals.

In several places I noticed earths of different colors, such as blue, a kind of vermilion, grass-green, glossy black, chalk white, and others the color of ochre. Had I forseen at the time that I should not go through these regions again, I would have taken some of each kind. I could not burden myself, knowing that I had a very long way to travel.

On August 11th (le II Août) we reached the mountain of the Gens des Chevaux. Our guide did not wish to go

further, and we set to work to build a small house in which to await the first Indians we might discover; we also lit fires on all sides as signals to attract people to us, being resolved to entrust ourselves to the first nations that should appear.

On September 10th only one Mantane remained with us; his comrade had left to return home ten days previous. Every day I myself went, or sent someone, to the heights to look out. On September 14th, our scouts perceived a smoke south-southwest of us.

I sent a Frenchman with our Mantane, and they found a village of the Beaux Hommes [Handsome People], who received them well. By signs, they made them understand that there were three more Frenchmen of us, established (bâtis) nearby. The chiefs next day sent some of their young men with our two men to search for us. We reached the village on the 18th and were received with great demonstrations of joy.

Our Mantane asked to be allowed to leave, being fearful of a nation that was hostile to his own. I paid him liberally and gave him whatever was useful and necessary for him to reach home, as I had previously done for his comrade.

We remained with the Beaux Hommes twenty-one days. I did my best to make them understand that they should guide us to a village of the Gens des Chevaux. They answered that some of the young men would guide us as far as the first of them we might meet. I gave them a number of presents, with which they seemed highly pleased.

We left there November [i.e., October] 9th, by which time we were beginning to understand them easily enough for our needs. Our guides led us south-southwest.

On the second day we came upon a village of the nation of the Petits Renards [Little Foxes], who showed great joy at seeing us. After having made some presents, I had our guides tell them that I was seeking the Gens des Chevaux, to guide us to the sea. The whole village set out [with us] at once, still keeping to the same route. I now felt sure that we could only find some sea already known. On the second day of our march we came to a very large village of the same nation. They were very friendly. I made them a number of presents, which they considered great curiosities and appeared to appreciate greatly.

They led us to a village of the Pioya [? Kioya, or Kiowa], which we reached on the 15th. There we were very well received. After having made some presents I proposed that they take us to some nation that was on the way to the sea. We continued on our way, to the southwest. On

the 17th we came to a large village of the same nation. I gave them some presents. We all journeyed together until the 19th, keeping to the south, in which direction we reached a village of the Gens des Chevaux. They were in great distress. There was nothing but weeping and howling, all their villages having been destroyed by the Gens du Serpent and very few persons having escaped.

This nation of the Serpent is considered very brave. During a raid they are not content with destroying a village, according to the custom of all Indians; they keep up the warfare from spring to fall. They are very numerous, and woe to those who cross their path! They are not friendly with any nation. It is said that in 1741 they completely defeated seventeen villages, killing all the men and the old women, making slaves of the young women, and selling them on the seacoast for horses and certain merchandise.

Among the Gens des Chevaux I inquired whether there was any knowledge of the nation that lived by the sea. They replied that none of their nation had ever been there, the way being blocked by the Gens du Serpent. By making a long detour we could later see certain nations that traded with the white people of the coast. By means of presents, I persuaded the village to set out and take me

to the Gens de l'Arc [People of the Bow], the only nation brave enough not to fear the Gens du Serpent. They have even caused the latter to fear them, through the wisdom and good leadership of the chief who is at their head. I was also given reason to hope that they would be able to give me some knowledge of the sea, since they were on friendly terms with certain nations who go there to trade.

Having traveled steadily southwest, on November 18th we encountered a very large village of the Gens de la Belle Riviere [People of the Beautiful River]. They gave us information about the Gens de l' Arc, who were not far away. We went together to the southwest. On the 21st we discovered their village, which appeared to us very large. All the nations of these regions have a great many horses, asses, and mules, which they use to carry their baggage, and for riding, both in hunting and in traveling.

When we reached the village the chief led us to his lodge (loge), treating us graciously and courteously, in a manner that seemed unlike the Indians. He had all our baggage put in his lodge, which was very large, and had special care taken of our horses.

Thus far, in all the villages we had passed through, we had been very well received, but it was nothing as

compared with the fine behavior of the head chief of the Gens del' Arc, unlike all the rest, a man not at all covetous, who always took the greatest care of everything that belonged to us.

I attached myself to this chief, who was worthy of all our friendship. In a short time, through the pains he took to teach me, I understood the language well enough to make myself understood, as well as to comprehend what he was able to tell me.

I asked him if they knew the white people of the seacoast, and whether they could take us there. He replied: "We know them through what has been told us by prisoners from the Gens du Serpent, among whom we shall arrive shortly. Do not be surprised if you see many villages assembled with us. Word has been sent in all directions for them to join us. You hear war songs every day; this is not without plan. We are going to march in the direction of the great mountains near the sea, to hunt for the Gens du Serpent. Do not be afraid to come with us; you have nothing to fear, and you will be able to look upon the sea for which you are searching."

He continued his speech thus: "The French who are on the seacoast are numerous. They have a large number of slaves whom they settle on their lands among each nation.

These have separate quarters, marry among themselves, and are not oppressed. The result is that they are happy and do not try to run away. They raise a great many horses and other animals, which they use in working their land. They have many chiefs for the soldiers, and also have many chiefs for prayer."

He spoke a few words of their language. I recognized that he was speaking Spanish, and what confirmed me in my opinion was the account he gave of the massacre of the Spanish who were going in search of the Missouri [River], a matter I had heard mentioned. All this considerably lessened my eagerness, concerning a sea already known; nevertheless I should very much have liked to go there, had it been feasible.

We continued our march, sometimes south-southwest, sometimes northwest, our band continually increasing through the addition of various villages, of different nations. On January 1, 1743, we found ourselves in sight of the mountains. The number of warriors exceeded two thousand; these with their families made a considerable band. We continued to march over magnificent prairies where wild animals were plentiful. At night there was nothing but songs and shouting, and scarcely anything was done, except that they came to weep upon our heads, to get us to accompany them



in the war. I steadily resisted, saying that we were sent to pacify the country, not to stir up things.

The chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc said over and over that he was troubled on our account, not knowing what all the nations would think of our unwillingness to accompany them. Seeing that we were committed to going with them, and could only withdraw on returning from the war, he asked us as a favor to accompany him simply as spectators, and begged us not to expose ourselves. The Gens de Serpent, he said, were our enemies as well as theirs, and we must surely know that they were friendly with no one.

We deliberated among ourselves about what we should do. We resolved to follow them, seeing that in our situation it was impossible to do anything else. I had, moreover, a strong desire to see the sea from the top of the mountains. I informed the chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc of what we had decided, and he seemed quite content. A great council was then called, to which we were summoned as was their custom. Long speeches were made on behalf of each nation. The chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc explained them to me. They all turned upon the measures to be taken for the protection of their women and children during their absence, and how best to approach the enemy. They then addressed us, begging us not to abandon them.

I replied to the chief of the [Gens de] l' Arc, who then repeated my reply to all the assembly, that the Great Chief of the French wished all his children to live peaceably, and had ordered us to induce all the nations to remain at peace, wishing to see all the country calm and peaceful; that, knowing that their hearts were sick, and with good reason, I bowed my head, and we would accompany them, since they so ardently desired it, but only to aid them with our advice, in case of necessity. They thanked us heartily, and held long ceremonies for us with the calumet.

We continued our search until January 8th. On the 9th we left the village, and I left my brother behind to guard our baggage, which was in the lodge of the chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc. Most of the men were on horseback, advancing in good order. Finally, on the twelfth day, we reached the mountains. In general, they are well wooded, with all kinds of trees, and appear to be very high.

Having come near the main part of the village of the Gens du Serpent, our scouts returned to inform us that these people had made their escape with great haste, and had abandoned their dwellings (cabannes) and a large part of their belongings. This report brought fear to all our people, who were afraid that the enemy had discovered them,

were making for their villages, and would get there before they themselves could. The chief of the [Gens de] l' Arc did what he could to persuade them otherwise, and to urge them forward, but no one would listen to him. "It is very annoying," he said to me, "to have brought you this far and to be unable to go any further."

I was much vexed at not to be able to climb the mountains as I had hoped to do. We then decided to return. We had come to this place in very orderly fashion, but the return was very different; everyone fled his own way. Our horses, though good, were very tired and had not fed often enough. I went in company with the chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc, and my two Frenchmen followed us. After having gone a considerable distance without looking behind me, I noticed that they were missing. I told the chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc that I could no longer see my Frenchmen. He replied: "I will halt everyone who is with us."

I retraced my steps at a gallop, and saw them at the point of an island, letting their horses feed. Having joined them, I saw fifteen men approaching from the woods, covering themselves with their shields (paré-flèches) [cf. parflèches, or rawhide containers]. One of them was far ahead of the others, and we let them come within half a musket-shot. Seeing that they were preparing to attack us, I thought it

advisable to fire several shots at them, which made them retreat hastily. This weapon is highly respected among all these nations, which do not have the use of them, and whose shields cannot protect them against a musket ball.

We remained there until night, after which we set out following our notions [of direction] (selon notre idée), in hope of finding our own Indians. The prairies over which we passed are bare and dry, and the trail of the horses does not show. We continued on our way at random, not knowing whether we were on the right track. We finally arrived, among the first to do so, at the village of the Gens de l'Arc on February 9, the second day of our retreat (deroute).

The chief of the Gens de l'Arc had hastened off to stop the band that was marching with us, but they were too frightened to dally on ground so near the enemy. He was very uneasy, and the next day had a great "surround" made, to intercept us. He continued to have his people search for us, but without success. He finally reached the village five days after we did, more dead than alive, from worry over not knowing what had become of us. The first news he received was that we had returned, fortunately, just before the bad weather, for on the day after our return fully two

feet of snow had fallen, accompanied by frightful weather. His sadness turned to joy; he did not know how to show us enough affection and friendship.

It surprised us to learn that the chief of the [Gens de l'Arc, with several others, had divided his people so as to surround us, in hope of finding us. Every day some of them arrived at the village, quite downcast and believing we were lost. All the other nations had separated, in order more easily to obtain meat. We continued to travel with the Gens de l'Arc until March 1st, going east-southeast all the while.

I sent one of our Frenchmen with an Indian to the Gens de la Petite Cerise [People of the Little Cherry, i.e., the Chokecherry], having learned that they were nearby. They were gone ten days on the trip and brought us a message inviting us to go and join them.

I revealed our plan to the chief of the [Gens de] l'Arc, who was greatly affected at finding us resolved to leave him. We were no less affected at parting from him, because of the kind treatment he had always shown us. To console him, I promised to come and see him again, on condition that he consent to settle near a small river that I pointed out, and build a fort and raise grain there.

He agreed to everything I proposed, and begged that, as soon as I had seen my father at Fort La Reine, I would the coming spring again depart to return and join him. To console him, I promised him everything he desired, and made him a present of whatever I thought would be useful to him.

Seeing no opportunity to be taken to the Spanish settlements, and having no doubt that my father would be very anxious about us, we decided to make for Fort La Reine, and left the Gens de l'Arc with great regret on both sides. We arrived among the Gens de la Petite Cerise on March 15th. They were returning from their winter villages (d'hiverement), and were two days march from their fort, which is on the bank of the Missouri.

We reached their fort on the 19th, and were there received with great demonstrations of joy. I applied myself to learning their language, and found it quite easy. There was a man among them who had been brought up among the Spanish, and spoke their language like his own. I questioned him often, and he told me all that had been reported to me about him (à son sujet), that he had been baptized and had not forgotten his prayers. I asked him if it were easy to go there. He replied that it was a great distance, that the risks were many on account of (par

rapport à) the nation of the Serpent, and that one would need at least twenty days' time to go there on horseback.

I inquired about their trade. He told me that they wrought iron and did a great trade in buffalo-hides and slaves, giving in exchange horses and goods as the Indians desired, but no muskets or ammunition.

He informed me that, three days' journey from where we were, there was a Frenchman who had been settled there for several years. I would have gone to find him if our horses had been in condition. I decided to write him, asking that he come to see us, and saying that we would wait for him until the end of March, and hoped to leave at the beginning of April, to go to the Mantanes and thence to Fort La Reine, and also that if he could not come he should at least let us have some news of himself.

On an eminence near the fort I deposited (Je posai) a lead tablet (plaque de plomb) bearing the arms and inscription of the King, and placed some stones in a pyramid, for the General. I told the Indians, who had no knowledge of the lead tablet I had put in the ground, that I was setting up these stones in memory of the fact that we had been in their country. I should greatly have wished to take the latitude (prendre hauteur) at this place, but our astrolabe had from the beginning of our journey been useless, the ring being broken.

Seeing that April had arrived without news of our Frenchman, and being urged by the guides that I had hired to take us to the Mantanes, and our horses being in good condition, I prepared to leave and made several presents to the chiefs of the nation, who had always taken care of us and treated us well, and also to some of the most important of our good friends.

I left word with the chiefs that if, by chance, the Frenchman I had written to should come to their fort, a short while after our departure, he might come and see us among the Mantanes, since we intended to make some little stay there. I should have been glad to get him away from the Indians. I assured the chief of the nation that I would take very special care of the three young men he was letting us have as guides, and that although the Mantanes were their enemies they would have nothing to fear while they were with us.

We left on April 2d, to the great regret of the whole nation. They earnestly begged us to come again and see them.

On the 9th, about noon, we came to a village of twenty-five families (cabanes) of the Gens de la Flèche collée [People of the glued arrow], otherwise called the Sioux of the Prairies. We passed among the women and the



baggage, and stopped for a very short while. They were quite friendly, and showed us the place where they were going to camp. We kept within sight of their village, expecting that some of them would come to see us, and keeping constantly on our guard, but no one came.

The next day we resumed our journey, sometimes north-northeast, and sometimes northwest, till we came to the Mantanes, without meeting anyone. We reached that place on May 18th. I sent back our guides after having fully satisfied them.

We had intended to remain there fifteen or twenty days, to rest and put our horses in good condition, but on the 26th I learned that there were some Assiniboin at Fort La Butte (au fort de la Butte), who were about to leave for Fort La Reine. We quickly made ready to profit by this opportunity, and to protect ourselves at the same time from enemies. We passed by Fort La Butte the morning of the 27th, but the Assiniboin had just left. We had not let them know that we wished to go with them. Two Mantanes came forward, who wished to go to see my father, and learn the way to our fort. We hastened our pace somewhat, and caught up with the Assiniboin at their camp. There were more than a hundred of them, and we continued our way together.

On the 31st our scouts discovered thirty Sioux in ambush along our route. We advanced on them in a body. They were

greatly surprised to see so many people, and retreated in an orderly fashion, from time to time facing about, toward those who came too near them. They were well aware of the kind of men they had to deal with, for they considered the Assiniboin to be cowards. As soon as they saw us, however, all mounted on horses, and recognized us for Frenchmen, they fled in great haste, never looking back. We had no one killed, but several were wounded. We do not know what their losses were, except that one man got among ours [and was captured - Le Sueur].

We reached the village near the mountain on June 2d. As our horses were tired, we put off traveling <sup>and remained</sup> at the village until the 20th. We then took a guide to lead us to Fort La Reine, which we reached on July 2d, to the great satisfaction of my father, who was very anxious about us, it having been impossible to get news to him about ourselves since our departure, and to our own great satisfaction, at seeing ourselves out of troubles, perils, and dangers.

[Not signed]

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As with the record of the explorations of 1738 and 1739, the account translated here is not the original document that could be desired. The Chevalier's account is of course an official draft, probably a copy of his original letter to Beauharnois, made at Quebec. It is, in any case, the record as it was seen in Paris by the colonial ministry and <sup>by</sup> geographers of that center of learning.

Apart from its official character, the account of the events of 1742 and 1743 is in some respects less impressive even than the record of the earlier expedition. The Chevalier's letter seems to be a reminiscent account, written without recourse to a field record such as that available to the father in 1739. That such a field record was kept by the Chevalier and his brother on their distant trip is doubtful; it would have been difficult to keep such a record, especially during times such as the headlong flight with the Gens de l'Arc and others from the enemy they had boldly gone to attack.

The Chevalier's letter, of course, provides a number of specific dates, as well as intervals of time spent at various places or in travel. Such statements as occur, however, could readily have been based on recollection. The error of a month that crept into the draft early in

the account may be no more than a copyist's error, and is easily corrected. But elsewhere the confusion sounds suspiciously like faulty recollections.

There has, in fact, been a great deal of discussion as to the identity of the writer himself. Some have felt that the Chevalier must have been Pierre, the eldest surviving son. It is now, however, generally agreed that the Chevalier was François, particularly in view of the evidence provided by the lead tablet found at Fort Pierre, South Dakota, to be described shortly.<sup>5</sup>

Nothing is known of the time or place at which this account was written, which might suggest something of its reliability. Had it been composed at Ft. La Reine, in July of 1743, <sup>immediately</sup> after the return of the party, it would of course be more reliable than if <sup>it</sup> were written the following year. There is, however, no reliable evidence on this point; we know only that it was forwarded to Paris by Beauharnois, with a covering letter, on October 27, 1744.<sup>6</sup> It is probably significant that, in the <sup>review</sup> ~~account~~ of all of his efforts in the west, written by the senior La Vérendrye at the same time, the father refers to his son's account as but "a little journal," as though to suggest that it was of no great moment; it is even hinted that the account had just been prepared.<sup>7</sup>

Identifiable errors in the letter, such as the entry of "November" for "October," are less troublesome than other parts of the account itself. Thus, while the party was trying to obtain guides among the Mantanes who could take them to the Gens des Chevaux, it is said that they hoped to find some Indian village "near the mountain" or along the way. The "mountain" alluded to here is obscure. It seems probable that, by anticipation, the Chevalier ~~is~~ <sup>here</sup> referring <sup>ed</sup> to the "mountain of the Gens des Chevaux," which he reached twenty days later; but there is no means by which this "mountain" can be positively identified. It can refer only to some feature reached twenty days' travel west-southwest from the Mantanes, the magnitude of which is a matter for speculation.

It seems clear that the course of travel, at least from the time the party left the Mantanes, was erratic at best. The direction seems to have been generally to the southwest, if we accept the readings of the narrative. From the village of the Pioya, reached October 15, the party is said to have "continued to the southwest." Two days later, having been joined by others of this nation, they continued, "keeping to the south." Yet on November 18th, when the Gens de la Belle Riviere were met, we read that they had been traveling "steadily southwest." The text seems unreliable, whether because of discrepancies

by a copyist, or because of the Chevalier's faulty memory.

One other case is worthy of comment. About November 21, the French, with the mixed party of Indians, reached the Gens de l'Arc. After learning something of their language, the Chevalier says that he was induced to follow these Indians on a raid, to be made in the direction of the "great mountains near the sea." But the direction in which the raid was made is far from clear. We read that the march was "sometimes south-southwest, sometimes northwest." Accepting the text at face value, we have no choice but to infer that the march was made according to the needs of the moment. Later, when the Indians became alarmed at the enemy's <sup>hostile</sup> disposition toward them, and fled in all directions, we read that the French tried to return to the village of the Gens de l'Arc by simply following their "notions" of the right direction. None of this sounds as though directions were by the compass, nor do we read of the use of this instrument in the account at any time.

Even more troublesome in using the document is the matter of the identity of the native groups they mention. Most of the groups are referred to only by the French version of some native name, and their identity is usually hidden or obscure. Lacking other early sources that might

provide information on these groups, or linguistic or cultural evidence, students have usually been content with speculation, unsupported by verifiable data. Few of the names, in fact, are amenable to identification, for our source is scarcely a document permitting precise historical conclusions. Yet such conclusions have been drawn.

The topic has been needlessly complicated and obscured by uncritical scholarship. All too often there has been a failure to discriminate between verifiable fact, reasonable guess, and mere opinion. The following review of the problem is purposefully brief, since the importance of the details has sometimes <sup>been</sup> greatly over<sup>^</sup>rated, and more than occasionally misinterpreted.

Two sources from the French régime merit particular attention. One is a statement from the diary of the Swedish scientist and traveler, Pehr (Peter) Kalm; the other is from a mem<sup>^</sup>oir of the French naval officer and traveler, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville. Both men had the opportunity to learn at first hand, in New France, of the results of the La Vérendryes in the west. Their statements on these matters therefore constitute contemporary <sup>first</sup> ~~on~~ <sup>hand</sup> ~~the spot~~ evidence. Kalm, who was in Quebec in August, 1749, <sup>seems to have</sup> ~~actually~~ interviewed the elder La Vérendrye only four months before he died, and he may also have met other

members of the family, as well as the clerics whom he mentions as having interviewed.<sup>8</sup>

In his diary, published in 1753-1761, Kalm mentions that he had talked to several Jesuits who were familiar with much of New France. The Swede was struck by the contrast between the Old and the New Worlds with respect to records of their histories. The history of the New World began with the arrival of Europeans, "for everything that happened before that period," he wrote, "is more like fiction or a dream than anything that happened."<sup>9</sup> He was told, however, that a few "marks of antiquity" had been found, from which he conjectured that North America was "formerly inhabited by a nation more versed in science and more civilized than that which the Europeans found on their arrival here." Kalm's interpretation of these observations seemed less improbable in the eighteenth century than it now does.

His conjecture, Kalm felt, was confirmed by an account he had received from "Mr. de Verandrier." <sup>Kalm</sup> ~~He~~ had, he wrote, also heard the same account from others "who were eye-witnesses of everything that happened on that occasion."<sup>10</sup>

Kalm was interested particularly in the description he was given of regions "far into the country beyond any nations," where the explorers sometimes discovered great



tracts of land lacking any kind of tree, and "covered with a kind of very tall grass for the space of some days' journey." Kalm here preserves something of the impressions gained by the La Vérendryes in their first penetration of the virgin grasslands of the west, beyond their own mention of the "magnificent plains." Kalm was also interested in several strange phenomena mentioned, such as areas of the plains on which the land was furrowed as though it had been plowed. "In what manner this happened, no one knew, for the grain fields of a great village or town of the Indians are scarce above four or six of our acres in extent; whereas those furrowed plains sometimes continued for several days' journey, except now and then a small smooth spot, and here and there some rising grounds."<sup>11</sup> These strange furrows were doubtless the ancient and deeply rutted buffalo paths of the prairies, which ran parallel over great distances. Needless to say, they were not human antiquities except insofar as these ruts became Indian trails, and the paths of French travelers, as they did of later voyagers.

Even stranger tales were given the interested Swede — of impressions of human feet in rock, for example. But he was particularly struck in hearing of great pillars of

stone, seen in the distant west by the French where, "to the best of their knowledge, no Frenchman, or European, had ever been."<sup>12</sup> Some of these pillars were described as consisting of a single stone, which the French could only suppose had been erected by human hands. In other cases, they had been so laid one upon another "and, as it were, formed into a wall."

Kalm understood that the chief purpose of the western explorations of the La Vérendryes, "to come to the South Sea," had not been attained.<sup>13</sup> Kalm's account of the expedition of the Chevalier was clearly garbled: he said that the Chevalier's party was induced to take part in a war between some of the most distant Indian tribes, which is not far from the truth, but that some of the French were taken prisoner, and the rest obliged to return. Kalm must have misunderstood his informants at this point, for the Chevalier's account simply says that his men were separated for a time from him.

Among the most westerly Indians the French had met, Kalm heard, they learned that "the South Sea was but a few days' journey off," and that the Indians "often traded with the Spaniards on that coast and sometimes also they went to Hudson Bay, to trade with the English." Kalm also learned that many tribes of the western regions had

never seen any Frenchmen. These Indians were usually clad in skins, but many went quite naked. He also found that "Some of these savages had houses which were made of earth."<sup>14</sup> The inquiries of the Swede had probably not satisfied him, but they provide information not elsewhere recorded, and they throw some light on French document. It is curious that Kalm's record makes no mention of the French having approached any high mountains, or of their discovery of the "River of the West."

Bougainville's memoir is more useful in tracing the career of the La Vérendryes in the west, for it preserved several details, particularly of the native groups met in 1742 and 1743. Bougainville had been ordered to military duty with <sup>General</sup> Montcalm in New France at the beginning of the French and Indian War. Although he had no opportunity to visit the western countries himself, he obtained information about it directly from colonials well acquainted with the region.<sup>15</sup> In 1757 he prepared an account of New France that is of particular interest to us, a memoir written for the patroness of his family, Mme. Hérault de Séchelles.

Bougainville gave particular attention to the military organization of the colony, especially to the posts in the west.<sup>16</sup> This command merited special attention on two counts, he said. It was the nearest to the English posts

on Hudson Bay, so was the base from which English operations could be kept track of; and it was from this base that discovery of the Sea of the West might be made.<sup>17</sup> He was well aware of the official attitude of the colonial ministry toward this topic, for he says that if this discovery were to be achieved, those who undertook it must avoid the suspicion of serving selfish personal ends.

In the memoir of 1757 we have a brief but sympathetic account of the efforts of the La Vérendryes in the west. Although others had now taken their place, Bougainville acknowledged that none had accomplished more in the way of exploration than they. From Ft. La Reine La Vérendrye had reached the Missouri, where he met the "Mandannes," numbering seven villages, surrounded by fortifications of palisaded <sup>earth</sup> works with ditches.<sup>18</sup> After this, he said, the explorers had met the Kinongewiniris, who were also known as the Brochets (Pike or Sturgeon People), numbering three villages. The identification of these Pike or Sturgeon People has not been worked out, <sup>but</sup> it seems possible that, since the form is given in Algonquian, they were a division of the great Algonquian speaking stock, perhaps the Siksisia or Blackfoot.

It has been suggested that, in view of the location of this group with respect to the Mantannes, in Bougainville's

account, these Brochets may have been the Mandans' neighbors, the Hidatsa.<sup>19</sup> This seems unlikely, for the Hidatsa appear nowhere else under such a designation. The Brochets, in brief, cannot be identified with any of the groups mentioned by the Chevalier in his letter. The same group, apparently, is mentioned by Jacques Legardeur de St. Pierre - La Vérendrye's successor in the west - as the Kinongeouiline. His reference, however, <sup>also</sup> lacks clues as to their identity.<sup>20</sup> This group is identified by some with a group of the Chippewa known as Nana (Sturgeon) in that tongue, but they can scarcely be the Kinongewirinis of Bougainville's account.<sup>21</sup> Bougainville's account, in any case, does not deal with those Indian groups long known to the French, such as the Chippewa, but with the more removed groups, first met far beyond the Great Lakes.

Still others, in attempting to identify the Brochets, have suggested that they were the Assiniboin, frequently called Hohay (or Ho-he) - Fish Eaters - in Siouan languages.<sup>22</sup> But this suggestion is even less probable than the others for the La Vérendryes had long known the Assiniboin.<sup>23</sup> The identity of the Brochets is but one problem of the kind raised by the French documents.

Bougainville further recorded that the explorers, "on the upper part of the [Missouri] river," next met the

Mahantas, with three villages. Further down the river, as far as the mouth of the River Wabiek, or à la Coquille (Shell River), were twenty-three villages of the Panis. The explorers probably made no claim to Bougainville of having descended the Missouri far enough to visit all these Panis, but there is reason to believe that they had met at least part of that nation. Based on Bougainville's account, <sup>the French</sup> by 1757 knew of the Caddoan-speaking peoples of the Nebraska region, and of their relationship with those of the upper Missouri River in the Dakotas. The Platte River, the early historic residence of the Pawnee, was probably the river referred to in his account as the Shell. The North Platte was later known to some Indians as the Shell (or Shell-on-Neck) River, perhaps a survival of early names of streams in the Nebraska country.<sup>24</sup> Although the Rivière à la Coquille has been identified as the Musselshell River, of central Montana, this seems most improbable, for a variety of reasons.

The identity of the Mahantas is likewise uncertain. Thwaites suggested that they may have been the Omaha, which is not impossible: the "upper part" of the Missouri on which these people lived need not have been above the Mandannes. A more plausible alternative is that these Mahantas may have been the Amahami, or Awaxawi, one of

the lesser known subgroups of the Hidatsa. The Awaxawi were sometimes called Mahahs, Mahaha, or Mahawha by La Vérendrye's successors.<sup>25</sup>

Bougainville then says that southwest of the Missouri, and on both banks of the Ouanaradeba, or à la Graisse (Fat River, or Buffalo Fat River), lived the Hactannes. These people were also known as the Gens du Serpent -- no doubt the same as the enemies in the account of 1742 - 1743. They occupied a region extending to the foot of a chain of mountains of great height, according to Bougainville, south of which was the River Karoskiou, or Cerise peloe (Smooth Cherry River, or ? Petite cerise, Chokecherry). This river was thought to flow toward California.

This great mountain range, to the foothills of which the Gens du Serpent were said to range, Margry had no difficulty in identifying as the Rockies, Les Montagnes Rocheuses. Probably few would challenge this interpretation. It is doubtless on the evidence of such documents as this of Bougainville -- as much as on the Chevalier's letter itself -- that Margry, Parkman and others have said that the La Vérendryes in 1743 actually saw, if from a distance, the great continental divide. The Chevalier's claims of discoveries that year are modest ones; but that the French first approached the Rocky Mountains in that year is

reasonable, and this seems to have been Bougainville's understanding of the matter.

Bougainville's memoir bristles with even less easily pronounced native names, some of which pertain to groups mentioned in the Chevalier's letter. It says that the French found, "in the vast region drained by the Missouri," on its far side and about forty leagues from the Mahantas, another group. These people, the Owilioek, or Beaux Hommes, lived in four villages. The Chevalier's party had succeeded in finding a village of a people of this name after having passed the region of the many colored earths - certainly somewhere in the western Dakotas - and reached the "mountain" of the Gens de Chevaux. The Chevalier had spoken of his difficulty in communicating with these Beaux Hommes, and says that this was finally achieved by means of signs. By this means we can be sure that the Beaux Hommes spoke no dialect familiar to the explorers.

Some have identified these Beaux Hommes as the historic Crow Indians.<sup>26</sup> The language of the Crow is, however, closely related to that of the Hidatsa, from whom they had separated,<sup>27</sup> and both languages are related to that of the Mandan. All are dialects of Siouan, and since one of the Mantane guides was still with them, we can conclude that



the Beaux Hommes were not a Siouan-speaking group. Since the native name of the group recorded by Bougainville is Owilinioek, an Algonquian form, it is possible that they were related to that group. If so, however, it would be strange that the Vérendrye brothers, long familiar with dialects such as Cree, should not have recognized another Algonquian dialect. Only after spending twenty days among the Beaux Hommes did they begin to understand the tongue well enough to make their needs known.

Who then were these Beaux Hommes? Perhaps they were a nomadic band of the <sup>or Blackfeet</sup> Siksika, who also spoke <sup>a</sup> dialect of Algonquian, although more distantly related than those with which the Vérendrye brothers were familiar. The Siksika are, apparently, called the Beaux Hommes by Dobbs in his <sup>1744</sup> account of the peoples of the area explored by the Hudson's Bay Company. <sup>28</sup> Dobbs' informant,

interestingly enough, was one Joseph La France, a mixed-blood voyageur who had deserted from La Vérendrye's command in about 1741, after several years of service in the west. Bougainville's form, Owilinioek, appears to contain the Algonquian iliniouek (or ilini-wek) - "they are men," or "we are men" - that gave rise to the name of another Algonquian group, the Illinois. In any case, the significance of the form as given by Bougainville is obscure. Only

further linguistic research offers any hope of positive identification of these "Handsome People." It is possible, also, that both the Beaux Hommes and the Brochets, although apparently distinguished by the Chevalier, were simply different elements of the Siksika, or of the closely knit confederacy of which the Siksika were the leading tribe.<sup>29</sup>

Further, says Bougainville, opposite the Brochets were the Macataoualasitas, or Pieds Noirs (Black Feet), in three villages of about a hundred dwellings each. The French translation of the Pieds Noirs is a further source for confusion. These people were not the historic Blackfoot, <sup>more</sup> correctly known as the Souliers Noirs (Black Moccasins), nor were they the Awaxawi. The Awaxawi, or Amahami, were a Siouan-speaking tribe, closely related to the Hidatsa, and regarded as a sub-group of that tribe. They were referred to by Lewis and Clark and others as the Watersoon or Wetersoon, a name apparently given them by the Mandan. They had been called by the French also the Soulier Noirs or Gens des souliers ( ? Gens des souliers noire, People of the Black Moccasin).<sup>32</sup> That the Pieds Noirs in Bougainville's account were the Awaxawi seems to be confirmed by his remark that they were settled in three villages of about a hundred dwellings each. This

is the only mention in his account of the number of dwellings for the tribes mentioned, and probably refers to the more permanent earth lodges the Missouri River villagers inhabited. Although it is unlikely that there were ever as many as three Awaxawi villages of the size mentioned, it is possible that the term applies to the three Hidatsa sub-groups as a whole: the Hidatsa-Proper, the Awatixa, and the Awaxawi.<sup>33</sup>

Bougainville goes on to tell us that, opposite the Mandannes, La Vérendrye found the Ospikakaerenousques, or Gens du plat côté. These people, although not identifiable, are at least not the Plat côté de Chiens, the Dog Rib Indians of northern Canada!

Further down the Missouri, Bougainville continues, and opposite the Panis, were the Gens de l'Arc. These people lived in three villages, and were called the Atchapciviniouques by the Cree, and the Utasibaoutchactas by the Assiniboin. Only further linguistic research can determine who these people were, who were so friendly to the Chevalier and his party. Since they are known by name by both the Cree and Assiniboin, there may have been some kind of relationship between them, perhaps in trade; perhaps, also, they did not live too far apart.

Parkman was of the opinion that the Gens de l'Arc were one of the bands of the western Sioux, or Dakota.<sup>34</sup> Others have sought to identify them with Indians supposed to have once lived on the Bow River, a tributary of the distant Saskatchewan, a quite improbable suggestion.<sup>35</sup> A more plausible hypothesis is that they were the Cheyenne or Arapaho.<sup>36</sup> The French would scarcely have found friends among any branch of the Sioux, even among distant western relatives of the bitter enemy of the woodlands they formerly occupied. Almost every reference to the historic Dakota in the documents of this period testifies to the enmity of the French for that warlike nation. And the Chevalier would be unlikely to forget the massacre of 1736 on Lake of the Woods, or the long warfare of the Cree and Assiniboin (both of them French allies) with these nomadic warriors.

Beyond the People of the Bow, wrote Bougainville, were the Makesch, or Petits Renards, in two villages; the Piwassa, or Grands-Parleurs (Great Talkers), in three; the Kakakoschena, or Gens de la Pie (Magpie People), in five; and the Kiskipisounouinini, or Gens de la Jarretière (People of the Garter), in seven villages. The first two must be passed over for lack of any kind of data on them. It has been suggested that the Gens de la Pie may have been the Arapaho, another important Plains people, and also

Algonquian speaking.<sup>37</sup> Lewis and Clark called the Arapaho the Kun-na-nar-wesh, and the French called them the Caninanbiches.<sup>38</sup> There are also similar forms in accounts by Jean Baptiste Truteau and Alexander Henry.<sup>39</sup> A more recent form of this name is Kaninavish.

The name Kaninavish applied to the Arapaho is of interest here because of the fact that it appears to signify "kite," or magpie, and the French and English names are probably direct translations from native names. English magpie itself is but an adaptation of the French pie, and the meaning is the same. It is, therefore, more than likely that the Gens de la Pie of the Chevalier's letter were a band of Arapaho. To further complicate the matter, however, Lewis and Clark also called the Crow Indians by the name Kite Indians!<sup>40</sup> This name for the Crow was, at least, simply a variant of the French Gens des Corbeaux. The corbeau of France was the raven, but the word came to be applied by colonials also to the American crow. The American crow, of course, belongs to the same family (Corvidae) as the magpie. Although the raven is not a crow, nor the crow a magpie, nor the magpie a true kite, we may believe that the Arapaho were the Gens de la Pie!

Having come so far along in this thorny ethnographic (and ornithological) thicket, it is necessary to go a bit

further. The Chevalier's party of 1743 was, according to Bougainville, unable to go beyond the Gens de la Jarretière because of a war then taking place between them and one of their neighbors. These people may have been called the People of the Garter because of the fact that, unlike most of the peoples of the northern Plains - where the men wore a short legging extending to the thigh - these people may have <sup>worn</sup> a short legging tied above the knee with something resembling a garter. Thwaites, who makes this quite reasonable suggestion, supposed the people to have been the Comanche, or perhaps the Navajo.<sup>41</sup> Both these groups, as did other tribes in the southern Plains, used the short legging tied above or below the knee. It cannot be proven that La Vérendrye came into contact with either of these groups in the northern Plains, but we are surely on safe ground to infer that they came into contact with Shoshonean-speaking peoples there, whose culture was so similar in many ways to that of the Comanche and Navaho, and so different from those other groups familiar to the Vérendrye brothers.

We come at last to the identity of the enemy against whom the raid was made, the peoples referred to by the Chevalier as the Gens du Serpent, and by Bougainville as the Hactannes. The term "Snake People" might, if taken

alone, be thought to be a vague term for enemy, for Indians referred to many such enemies in this vein. From other evidence, however, it seems probable that Hactannes is a variant of the name Ietan. This term was applied to various peoples of the western Plains, notably to the Utes, the Shoshoni, and the Comanche.<sup>42</sup> The Comanche, under the name Iaitanes, were met by the Mallet brothers on the Arkansas River in 1739, and they were distinctly unfriendly.<sup>43</sup> It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Indians met <sup>by</sup> the war party, accompanied by the brothers La Vérendrye five years later, may have been the Comanche or Shoshoni - especially given the distances some of these groups frequently went on war parties.

Bougainville concludes his account of these new peoples of the Plains with the remark that it was actually improper to use the term "village" for them, as he had done. "Like the Turks (Tartares)," he says, these nations are made up of "wandering hordes, [who] follow the beasts by whose hunting they live, [and] their dwellings are cabins of skins."<sup>44</sup> Proper consideration of such sources as Bougainville, which underscores the nomadic nature of the Indians living west of the Missouri River met by the La Vérendrye brothers, should have avoided some of the more fanciful speculations that have been offered on their identification.

In the account of the Spanish given the La Vérendrye brothers by the Gens de l'Arc chief, reference was made to an event in Spanish colonial history that is documented. This was the murder of certain Spaniards "who were going in search of the Missouri." This event was the massacre of an expedition of 1720, under Lieutenant-Colonel Don Pedro de Villazur. A party under his command had gone toward the east from Santa Fe in a reconnaissance of the northeastern frontier of Spanish territory. The party was attacked and routed by the Pawnee - perhaps with the aid of French traders - and only a few members survived.<sup>45</sup> This event had obviously been widely reported among the Plains Indians.

The letter of the Chevalier relating his adventures in 1742-1743 has been the subject of much speculation from the time it was first made known to historians by Margry. In 1852, Margry felt it was reasonable to suppose that the brothers had reached the Rockies - "one might think by way of the Yellowstone," he added.<sup>46</sup> When he later published the final volume of his Découvertes et Établissements des Français, he followed the interpretation of the account given by Parkman, whom he cites, believing that the mountains seen by the brothers were the Big Horns.<sup>47</sup>

Margry was also influenced by the interpretation of



Edmond Mallet that the brothers had reached the site of present day Helena, Montana. Mallet's contribution has not yet been found in print, <sup>or in manuscript,</sup> which is perhaps fortunate, given the free rein to imagination found in it. The account is, however, illustrative of the uncontrolled speculation to be offered by so many later writers, and may serve as a sample of numerous other such accounts. From the site of Helena, Mallet speculated, they moved south, passing the Musselshell, where they met the Têtes Plates [sic] (Flat Heads), apparently a corruption of Bougainville's Gens du plat côté. Here they crossed the Yellowstone River, moving to the Wind River Range near Fremont Peak, Wyoming, where they were told by the Gens du Serpent of the Green River, a stream south of the Wind River Range, and a tributary of the Colorado River. Needless to say, there is nothing in the Chevalier's letter, nor in Bougainville's account, of such wide wandering as would have brought the brothers this far west.

Francis Parkman's contribution to our knowledge of the La Vérendrye brothers was probably written in consultation with Margry, his agent in the Paris archives. This work first appeared in an article entitled, "The Discovery of the Rocky Mountains."<sup>48</sup> That the brothers had discovered the Rockies seems not to have been seriously

doubted, and was accepted by a number of other scholars.<sup>49</sup>  
Parkman was himself cautious in expressing himself, and suggested no more than that the brothers, from a distance, probably had a view of the Big Horn Mountains.<sup>50</sup>

The discovery at Fort Pierre, South Dakota, in 1913, of a lead tablet, apparently the one deposited by the La Vérendrye brothers in 1743, and referred to <sup>in his letter by</sup> the Chevalier, led to much new speculation concerning the routes taken during the journey.

The reopening of the whole matter of the accomplishments of the family frequently led to profitless debate between different historians. Their arguments, so often based on inadequate evidence, and on erroneous assumptions, surely brought a certain indirect benefit to history, in that they awakened many persons to the more dramatic elements of early western explorations. Some of these new interpretations were so fraught with error and so confusing that there is little point in reviewing them here in detail. De Land, <sup>for example,</sup> in a review in 1914, published more than two hundred pages of uncritical speculation on the single subject of the journey of 1742 and 1743.<sup>51</sup>

The circumstances surrounding the discovery of the lead tablet were carefully investigated by Doane Robinson, then Superintendent of the South Dakota State Historical Society.<sup>52</sup>

This plate, six by eight inches in dimension, and one-eighth inch thick, was discovered on a hill near the high school building in Fort Pierre on February 16, 1913. It is now in the collections of the Robinson Museum, in Pierre.<sup>53</sup>

The obverse of the tablet carries a die-stamped Latin inscription, with the arms of Louis XV; each corner bears a fleur-de-lis. The reverse side bears a brief legend, incised in French. The tablet gives every indication of authenticity. It is precisely of the kind that would be expected, and coincides with the extant record of the journey of the La Vérendrye brothers. The tablet is in fact strikingly similar to other lead tablets originally deposited by the French as evidence of prise de possession. The most important of these are the several lead tablets found in the Ohio River region, which were originally buried by the military expedition under the command of Celoron de Bienville.<sup>54</sup>

The text of the French inscription on the plate found at Fort Pierre is one derived after consultation with the Canadian historian, Benjamin Sulte, and the former French ambassador and scholar, Jules Jusserand; and by Dr. Louise P. Kellogg, of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and Doane Robinson and others of the South Dakota Society:

Placed by the Chevalier De La Verendrye Lo [Louis] Jost  
[Joseph] Verendrye, Louis La Londette and A. Miotte,  
The 30 March 1743<sup>55</sup>

The tablet reveals, in addition to the names of the two La Vérendrye brothers, the names of the two engagés who accompanied them. The names of such men were not often recorded.

The discovery of the tablet, Robinson felt,<sup>56</sup> settled a long disputed question, and definitely fixed the point at which the La Vérendryes reached the Missouri on their return from their explorations to its west - certainly a reasonable contention. Also, he thought, the discovery threw new light on the extent of their explorations. Although he believed that the exact route of the party "must always be a matter of conjecture," certain conclusions were justified.

Robinson was of the opinion that the rate of travel of the party was probably quite slow, so that it was not likely they could have reached the Rockies or the Big Horns in the time available.<sup>57</sup> He concluded that they probably went no farther than the region of the Little Missouri River before turning in a more southerly direction, and that they probably never went beyond the boundaries of the present Dakotas. His position, in short, was a cautious

one, for there is the possibility that the Chevalier's party was mounted for at least part of the time. They could therefore have moved more quickly than Robinson believed.

According to the Chevalier's report, he had reached the Gens de la Belle Riviere on November 18. Robinson identified this "Beautiful River" as the Cheyenne, whose northern fork is today known as the Belle Fourche (Beautiful Fork). The Cheyenne River, he says, was known to the Sioux as Wakpa Waste (River Beautiful) and, although they were latecomers to the region, he felt that they might have adopted the name by which the stream had been known to their predecessors.<sup>58</sup>

Robinson points out that the Gens du Serpent, who had been taken to be the Shoshoni, or Snake Indians, may have another explanation. The Plains Indians - and, he might have added, of other regions also - "almost universally" called their enemies "snakes." He felt that the characterization of these Gens du Serpent did not compare well with what is known of the Shoshoni, but better fitted the fierce Kiowa, whom he believed inhabited the vicinity of the Black Hills at this time. As for the Gens de l'Arc, Robinson inferred that they were builders of fortifications and planters of corn, like other earth

lodge peoples, and felt that they were "clearly Arikara or Pawnee, the only sedentary people of the region."<sup>59</sup> Such an identification of the People of the Bow is unwarranted, for the scant cultural information concerning them in the account makes this identification sheer speculation.

Indeed, it seems far more likely that these people were typical nomadic Plains peoples, not earth lodge peoples.

His identification of the Gens de la Petite Cerise as the Arikara is more convincing, for this tribe is known from historical and archaeological evidence to have lived about this time in what is now central South Dakota.<sup>60</sup>

Some of the objections offered in response to Robinson's generally cautious studies are in striking contrast to them. Some of them, in fact, are beneath serious notice.<sup>61</sup> One such objection will serve as an example: that the lead plate could not have been found <sup>h</sup> were it had been originally placed in the ground in 1743, so that the Fort Pierre region was of no importance in the study of the explorations of 1742-1743. Robinson's pungent response to this objection seems to have been generally accepted by <sup>most of</sup> those concerned with this matter: "To suggest that this plate might have been planted at a distant point, recovered by the Indians and carried to the mouth of the Bad River [at Fort Pierre], to be there

fortuitously dropped upon this eminence ["Verendrye Hill"], precisely complying with the conditions of the record, is a refinement of criticism approaching absurdity."<sup>62</sup>

One final matter remains before leaving the document prepared by the Chevalier. When the Frenchmen left the fortified village of the Gens de la Petite Cerise, which we now must presume was in the vicinity of Fort Pierre, for the Mantanes, they met a group which the Chevalier called the Gens de la Flèche colée, or "Sioux of the Prairies." This identification is not especially convincing, for the group was not overtly hostile, yet was not <sup>un</sup>friendly; for the Sioux were almost universally the arch enemy of the Plains tribes, as they were in the woodlands, and were especially troublesome to the French. Only a few days later, between the Missouri and Ft. La Reine, we read that the party discovered some Sioux in ambush along the way, an activity much more in keeping with their reputation.

George Will is of the opinion that these "Sioux of the Prairies" were not Sioux Indians at all, as the Chevalier believed, but rather a band of the Cheyenne,<sup>63</sup> who lived along the Missouri River about this time.<sup>64</sup> Although this ethnographic problem cannot be solved without more data

than are now available, other specialists of the area have no difficulty in identifying these "Sioux of the Prairies" with the Western Sioux, or Teton Dakota.<sup>65</sup>



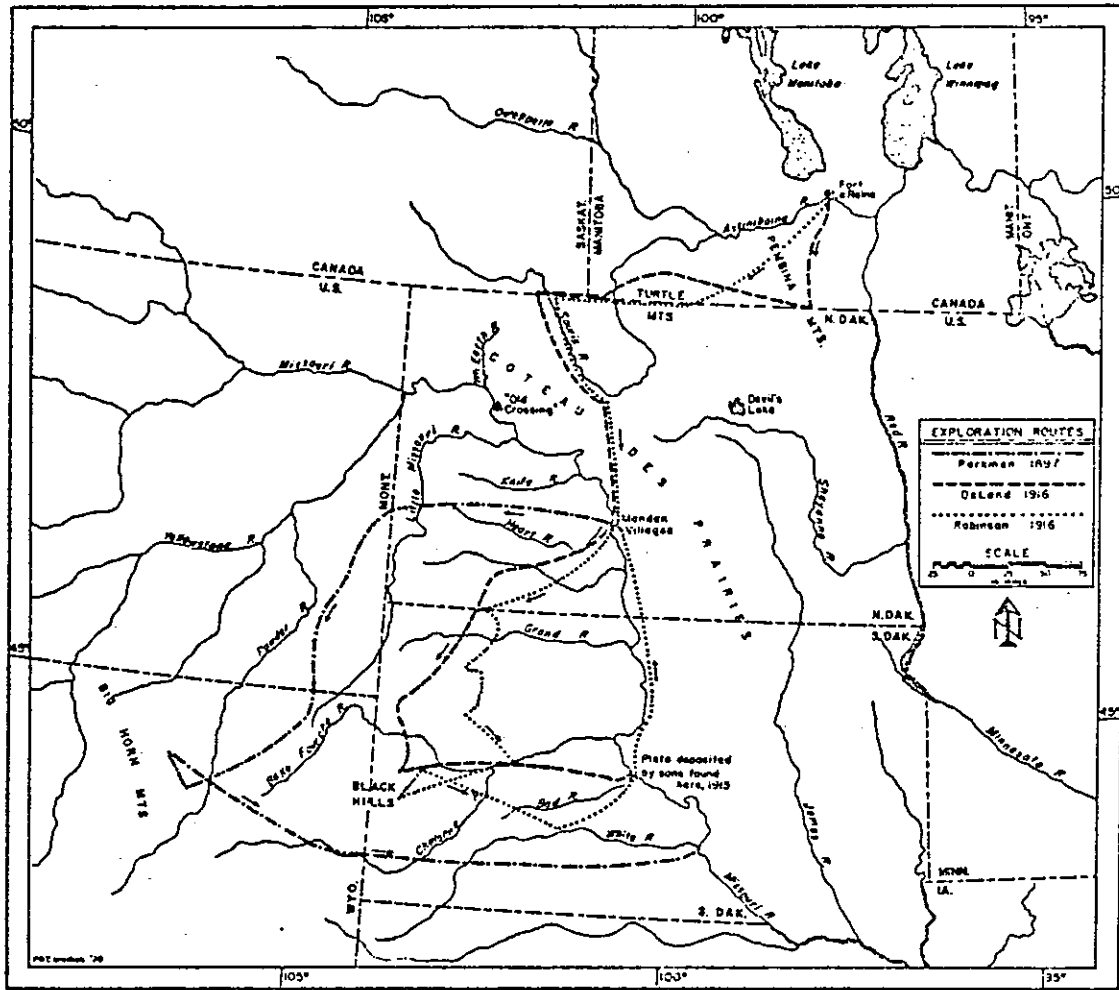


Figure 2. Routes taken by La Verendrye and his sons into the Northern Plains.

6

## DÉNOUEMENT

The explorations of the La Vérendrye brothers and the two engagés in the lands west of the Missouri River, while interesting as an episode in the history of the exploration of the continent, must have been one long disappointment to them and to their colleagues. "From the point of view of the Search for the Western Sea it was nothing but a fiasco. To the Minister Maurepas it was without significance..."<sup>1</sup> The Minister's censure foreshadowed the resignation or recall of La Vérendrye as commandant of the western posts, and his replacement, in 1744, by a new commandant - Nicholas-Joseph F. de Noyelles. Beauharnois, in a better position to appreciate the facts of the case, had earlier recommended La Vérendrye for a captaincy, and his name heads <sup>a</sup> list of candidates <sub>^</sub> for promotion.<sup>2</sup>

In 1744, La Vérendrye wrote directly to the Comte de Maurepas, describing his efforts in search of the long-sought

sea, declaring that "The glory of the King and the advantage of the Colony" had been his sole motives in pursuing this objective.<sup>3</sup> He had, he said, always been eager for the search, but that he had been the victim of a series of misfortunes, which he reviewed. Personal profit, however, had never been a primary consideration, for he was deeply in debt for his efforts. But this defense of his actions was in vain, for it was made to an administrator who consistently showed not the faintest interest in the political expansion or commercial welfare of the colony under his direction. Belatedly, the rank of captain was given La Vérendrye, but he was removed from his former command.

After less than two years in command of the posts of the west, his successor gave up the struggle. La Vérendrye was again placed in charge of the western division, as if in recognition that he alone was capable of the task. But his own work in the west was at an end, and he did not again leave the settlements. His former champion, Beauharnois - now <sup>himself</sup> in disgrace - was succeeded by other governors who, if less able, at least admitted the justice of La Vérendrye's position, and defended him as Beauharnois had done. On the very eve of his death, La Vérendrye, whose real merit had gone so long unrecognized, was awarded

the Cross of St. Louis, an honor coveted by poor colonials like himself.

This is not the place to follow the fortunes of the three sons who survived their father's death in December, 1749, though their later history is not without interest. But their story, and of the various feeble successors of their father in the west, is part of the history of western Canada, and has been well described elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

Rather, this is the place to summarize the significance of the explorations of the La Vérendryes into the Missouri River basin in the northern Plains of what is now north central United States. The experiences of the family in this direction probably offered scant hope of profitable trade, particularly given the problems of transporting the goods to market. This is surely one of the reasons the upper Missouri was less appealing than other areas, such as the Saskatchewan basin, to which La Vérendrye and his successors soon turned.

Yet the struggles of the La Vérendryes had first shown the true character of the geography of this mid-continental region, and that of its new native peoples. If their work bore little fruit, it was not for lack of effort. "It is a great pity," says one historian, "that a natural interest in whether the La Vérendrye group did or did not

reach the Rocky Mountains in their journeyings has tended in the past to obscure the importance of their having placed the Missouri and the great rivers of the North-West in their proper relation." La Vérendrye's great work was "to discover and describe the important relation of the three lakes, Winnipeg, Winnipegosis, and Manitoba, to the long rivers which came from the south and west and flowed into Hudson Bay, thereby providing important avenues for the further evaluation of the continent."<sup>5</sup>

More than thirty years was to intervene before the first beginnings of systematic trade in the upper Missouri was to commence. When it was, trade was resumed following old French trails. A disastrous war intervened - disastrous at least to the hopes of a French empire in the New World - a war which was to change the destiny of nations. The death of New France marked the birth of modern Canada, and the distant upper Missouri was all but forgotten.

Probably no more thoughtful and understanding appreciation of La Vérendrye and his efforts has been made than that of Arthur S. Morton. He remarks that, as the King's officer in command of the Posts of the North, La Vérendrye had the eye to see appropriate line of advance for the French, and the way to prosperity for New France. The means to this end was to occupy the forest belt in

the northwest, which was so rich in furs, and to confine the English to the barren and unproductive coast. This would "pre-empt a continent" for his King. His initial mistake lay "in cloaking this issue by holding out the prospect of an advance to the Western Sea." But La Vérendrye adhered to his vision of the future of his native colony, in spite of pressure from those in high places that forced him into vague and unproductive explorations. "When he entered the Upper Country, the English had won the Indians to their cause and service; when he died many of them had been won back to the French."<sup>6</sup>

"Champlain made the East and La Vérendrye grasped the West for the French. Together, they made the French masters of little short of a continent - of a vast domain which smaller men were to lose." In a land in which so many officials were greedy and corrupt, La Vérendrye, "the peer of Champlain in unselfish devotion," cast himself, the lives of his sons, the profits of the fur trade, and even his private fortunes, into the scale, and turned the balance in favor of France. The conquest of Canada, and the occupation of its west by British, have cloaked his achievements, leaving only geographers and local historians to honor his name. Had he been permitted

to follow his plan, says Morton, "he might well have brought the French to the Rockies by way of the River Saskatchewan, the only easy route, within his lifetime, and the honour of his country would not have been tarnished by his death in comparative poverty, a misunderstood and even a maligned man.<sup>7</sup> With this background behind us, we can better appreciate the accomplishments of the first man to visit the Mandans in their villages on the upper Missouri River, and that of his sons, who must surely have been the first Europeans to see the Rocky Mountains, and place him and his family among that cadre of explorers which surely includes also Lewis and Clark.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1727 La Vérendrye in command of Posts of the North (Nipigon, Kamanist<sup>ik</sup>wia, and Michipicoten)
- 1728 Meets <sup>Father</sup>Gonor at Michilimackinac
- 1729 La Vérendrye at Quebec; given trade license, destination not stated
- Sieur de Vercheres associated with La Vérendrye at Nipigon
- Sept. 1 La Jémeraye at Quebec, having returned from the Sioux
- 1730 La Vérendrye at Montreal
- 1731 - May 19 Contracts to trade at "Ouinipegon post"
- June 8 La Vérendrye, La Jémeraye (second in command), and three sons leave Montreal
- Aug. 1 Reach Michilimackinac; joined by <sup>Father</sup> ^ Mésaiger
- Aug. 26 Reach Grand Portage
- Aug. 27 Engagés mutiny
- La Jémeraye and one son sent to establish Ft. St. Pierre on Rainy Lake, where they winter



- 1732
- La Vérendrye winters at Kamanistikwia
- La Jémeraye returns to Kamanistikwia
- May 29 Jean-Baptiste La Vérendrye sent to  
Michilimackinac with furs
- June 8 La Vérendrye, La Jémeraye, Mesaiger, and  
two sons (Pierre and François) leave  
for Lake of the Woods
- July 14 Arrive at Ft. St. Pierre
- [August] Establish Ft. St. Charles on Lake of the  
Woods
- La Jémeraye and Jean-Baptiste sent to  
Lake Winnipeg
- November They return to Ft. St. Charles; party  
winters there
- Nov. 12 Convoy arrives from Michilimackinac  
with supplies
- 1733 - March La Jémeraye and Jean-Baptiste visit mouth  
of Winnipeg River
- May 27 La Jémeraye and Mesaiger leave Ft. St.  
Charles for Montreal
- Sept. 20 Reach Montreal (Quebec, Sept. 28)
- Sept. 27 Convoy arrives at Ft. St. Charles from  
Michilimackinac
- La Vérendrye winters at Ft. St. Charles

- 1734 - Jan. 2 Assiniboin, in council, describe the  
Ouachipouanes [Mandan]  
La Vérendrye makes brief visit to Ft.  
St. Pierre
- May 9 Holds council with Cree and Monsoni
- May 27 Jean-Baptiste returns to Ft. St. Charles  
from Lake Winnipeg  
La Vérendrye leaves for Montreal; Jean-  
Baptiste ordered to establish Fort  
Maurepas [I], and to remain until La  
Jémeraye returns from Montreal
- June 18 At Kamanistikwia, La Vérendrye sends the  
Sieur Cartier to build Ft. Maurepas  
near mouth of Red River
- July 6 At Michilimackinac, La Vérendrye meets La  
Jémeraye, returning; orders him to relieve  
Jean-Baptiste at Ft. St. Charles; Jean-  
Baptiste ordered to join Cartier at  
Ft. Maurepas
- Aug. 25 La Vérendrye reaches Montreal
- Oct. 12 Reaches Quebec; Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye,  
his youngest son, to study mathematics  
and drawing during the winter
- 1735 - Feb. 23 La Vérendrye at Montreal

- Beauharnois grants him permission to farm  
out posts for three years, to Gamelin and  
the Sieur de la Marque
- June 6 La Vérendrye, <sup>Father</sup> ^ Alneau, and Louis-Joseph  
leave Montreal for the west  
At Sault St. Louis, meet <sup>Father</sup> ^ Nau
- 1735 - Sept. 6 Reach Ft. St. Charles; party winters there  
La Vérendrye sends La Jémeraye to Ft.  
Maurepas with two sons and two men
- 1736 - May 10 La Jémeraye dies on Roseau River (or at  
Ft. Maurepas)
- June 4 The sons return to Ft. St. Charles with  
news of death of La Jémeraye
- June 8 Aulneau, Jean-Baptiste La Vérendrye, and  
[or 5] 19 men, en route to Michilimackinac,  
killed by Sioux on Lake of the Woods
- June 17 Sieur le Gras, with supplies, arrives at  
Ft. St. Charles
- June 19 Le Gras returns eastward
- Sept. 17 Remains of the dead buried in chapel at  
Ft. St. Charles
- October La Vérendrye holds council with Cree,  
Monsoni, and Assiniboin
- 1737 - Feb. 25 La Vérendrye at Ft. Maurepas, having gone  
overland, via Roseau River

- Mar. 5. Meets Cree and Assiniboin in council; sends  
invitation to the Ouachipouanes  
[Mandan] to meet him
- June 6 Leaves Ft. St. Charles for Quebec
- July 22 Reaches Michilimackinac
- Aug. 3 Leaves for Quebec
- Aug. 24 Reaches Montreal
- Oct. 1 La Vérendrye at Quebec
- 1738 His farming lease expires, and he again  
enters trade
- May Contracts with de Lorme and d'Ailleboust,  
Sr. (the Sieur de Coulonges)
- May 11 One son [Pierre ?] at Ft. St. Charles
- June 18 La Vérendrye leaves for the west
- July 20 Arrives at Michilimackinac
- Aug. 1 Reaches "Pais plats" (Flat Country, near  
Kamanistikwia)
- Aug. 5 Reaches Kamanistikwia
- Aug. 22 Reaches "little straits" [? outlet] of  
Rainy Lake
- Sept. 2 Arrives at Ft. St. Charles
- Sept. 11 Departs for the west, leaving Pierre in  
charge.
- Sept. 23 La Vérendrye arrives at Ft. Maurepas

- Sept. 24 Reaches junction of Assiniboine and Red  
rivers (site of Ft. Rouge); ascends  
Assiniboine River
- Oct. 3 Begins construction of Ft. La Reine  
(near Portage la Prairie)
- Oct. 8 La Marque and his brother, the Sieur Nolan,  
and party, reach Ft. La Reine, having  
established Ft. Rouge en route
- Oct. 18 La Vérendrye party, 52 persons (including  
La Marque, Nolan, and two sons), leave  
for country of Mantannes
- Dec. 3 Reach first village of the Mantannes
- Dec. 6 François and Nolan visit a second village  
of the Mantannes on the River of the  
West (Missouri)
- Dec. 7 They return to first village
- Dec. 8 François observes latitude of <sup>first</sup> this village;  
recorded as 48°12'
- Dec. 13 Party leaves for Ft. La Reine, except two  
men, left with the Mantannes
- Dec. 24 Party reaches Assiniboin camp; La Vérendrye  
ill; they remain here three days
- 1739 - Jan. 9 Party reaches "First Mountain" [Pembina  
Mountains?]; camp here; La Marque goes  
on ahead

- Feb. 1 La Marque reaches Ft. La Reine
- Feb. 10 La Vérendrye reaches Ft. La Reine
- Mar. 16 La Marque departs for Ft. Maurepas
- Apr. 16 François (Chevalier) and an Indian leave  
to explore the region of Lakes Manitoba  
and Winnipeg
- about Sanschagrin (sergeant) and one man sent  
Apr. 22 to the Assiniboin of Lake Manitoba
- May 10 Nolan leaves for the east
- May 28 Brigade departs for Michilimackinac; La  
Vérendrye's furs seized there on order  
of Hocquart (intendant)
- Sept. 29 The two Frenchmen return from the Mantannes  
to Ft. La Reine
- Oct. 20 Supply canoes return to Ft. La Reine from  
Michilimackinac
- 1740 - Spring La Vérendrye leaves Ft. La Reine for  
Montreal, leaving Chevalier (François)  
in charge
- July 16 La Vérendrye arrives at Michilimackinac;  
sends supplies to his sons; orders Pierre  
to go to the Mantannes, with two men,  
in the fall
- Aug. 25 La Vérendrye reaches Montreal; involved in  
lawsuit

- Reports to Beauharnois at Quebec
- 1741 - Apr. 15 Pierre leaves Ft. La Reine for Mantannes;  
descends Missouri River to a point  
"not far from two Spanish forts"
- June 26 La Vérendrye and Fr. Coquart leave Montreal  
for the west; Coquart remains at  
Michilimackinac; joins Pierre later in  
season [?]
- Sept. 16 La Vérendrye arrives at Ft. St. Charles
- Oct. 13 Arrives at Ft. La Reine; meets Pierre
- Fall Ft. Dauphin [I] built by Pierre on Lake  
Dauphin [?]
- Ft. Bourbon built by Pierre on Cedar Lake
- 1742 - Apr. 29 Chevalier and Louis-Joseph and two men  
leave Ft. La Reine for the Sea of the  
West, by way of the Mantannes
- May 19 Reach Mantannes
- July 23 Leave there, with two Mantanne guides (all on horseback ^
- Aug. 11 Reach Mountain of the Gens des Chevaux
- Sept. 18 Reach village of the Beaux Hommes
- Oct. 9 Leave this village, the Mandan guides having departed ^
- Oct. 11 Reach village of Petits Renards
- Oct. 15 Reach village of Pioya
- Oct. 19 Reach village of Gens des Chevaux
- Nov. 18 Reach village of Gens de la Belle Rivière

- Nov. 21 Reach village of Gens de l'Arc
- December Accompany them and other friendly bands  
on a war party
- 1743 - Jan. 1 Party comes in sight of high wooded  
mountains
- Jan. 9 War party, mounted, proceeds slowly  
toward mountains
- Jan. 21 Reach foot of mountains; scouts locate  
enemy villages of the Gens du Serpent;  
war party retreats; French lose their  
way
- Feb. 9 The French reach village of the Gens de  
l'Arc; whole party leaves to return  
eastward
- March 1 One man sent to locate Gens de la Petite  
Cerise, in neighborhood
- Mar. 10 He returns from winter camp of these people;  
French leave the Gens de l'Arc
- Mar. 15 Reach camp of the Gens de la Petite Cerise,  
two days' march from their fort on the  
Missouri River
- Mar. 19 Reach this fort
- Mar. 30 Chevalier claims region for France, depositing  
inscribed lead tablet under a rock cairn,  
near this fort



- Apr. 2 Party leaves for Mantannes, with three  
guides of the Gens de la Petite Cerise
- Apr. 9 Encounters band of Gens de la Flèche collée,  
or "Sioux of the Prairies"
- May 18 Arrives at Mantannes
- May 26 French leave the Mantannes for Ft. La Reine
- May 27 Pass "Fort La Butte" [? First Mantanne fort];  
skirmish with Sioux
- July 2 Arrive at Ft. La Reine; meet La Vérendrye  
there
- 1744 La Vérendrye replaced by Noyelles as commandant  
of the west; Ft. Maurepas [II] established  
on Winnipeg River
- 1745 La Vérendrye promoted to captain of colonial  
marine; Pierre at Montreal; at Saratoga  
under St. Pierre
- 1746 Pierre in Acadia under St. Pierre
- 1747 La Vérendrye replaces de Noyelles, but  
remains in east  
Chevalier at Michilimackinac  
~~Pierre on campaign against Mohawk, under~~  
~~La Corne and St. Pierre~~
- 1748 Ft. Bourbon [II] built on Lake Winnipegosis  
Ft. Poskoyac built near forks of the  
Saskatchewan River

- 1749 La Vérendrye given Cross of St. Louis;  
two of his sons promoted
- Dec. 6 Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, the Sieur de  
la Vérendrye, dies at Montreal; is  
buried in Notre-Dame de Montreal
- 1751 Ft. La Jonquière (or des Prairies) built  
on Saskatchewan River
- 1754 Ft. La Corne built as outpost of Ft.  
Poskoyac
- 1755 - Sept. 13 Pierre La Vérendrye dies at Quebec
- 1761 - October Louis-Joseph La Vérendrye drowned in wreck  
of the Auguste, en route to France with  
returning colonials
- 1794 - July 31 François La Vérendrye, known as the Sieur  
de Tremblay, dies at Montreal

## NOTES

## Foreword

1. The establishing proclamation gave the following legal description of the lands included within the boundaries of Vérendrye National Monument: the southeast quarter; the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter; and lots 4 and 5 of Section 14, Township 152 North, Range 93 West of the 5th Principal Meridian.
2. Contract no. I-100np-283
3. H.R. 1744, sponsored by North Dakota Representative Ushier L. Burdick.
4. Due to the passage of time, subsequent reorganizations of the National Park Service, and the death of the author, information on the circumstances of G. Hubert Smith's La Vérendrye research is difficult to gather. Contemporary correspondence relating to both Smith's research and the disestablishment of Vérendrye National Monument is on file at Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park and in the office of the Chief Historian, National Park Service, Washington. Copies of Smith's original study are to be found in both these places as well as in the libraries of the Midwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Offices (Omaha, Nebraska and Denver, Colorado, respectively) and the Midwest Archeological Center (Lincoln, Nebraska). Several individuals have provided me with information or otherwise furnished assistance, including Merrill J. Mattes, Bill Herr, Barry Macintosh, and Frank B. Sarles (National Park Service); Frank Vyzralek and James E. Sperry (State Historical Society of North Dakota); and Alan R. Woolworth (Minnesota Historical Society).

~~NOTES~~

## Chapter 1

1. For example, Moore 1928.
2. Morton 1939: 167.
3. Beauharnois to the Minister, Sept<sup>ember</sup> 28, 1733.  
ASH, 115-11: No. 9; translated in Burpee 1927 : 104).
4. Crouse 1928a; Delanglez 1947-1948.
5. Nute 1943: 34.
6. Wheat 1957: 141; Map 131.
7. Morton 1939: 163; Nasatir 1952 I: 33n, 62.
8. Morton 1939: 165.
9. Charlevoix, Mémoire sent to the Comte de Toulouse,  
Paris, Jan<sup>uary</sup> 20, 1723. AC, C11e, 16:102; transcript in the  
Public Archives of Canada.
10. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, Oct<sup>ober</sup> 1, 1731.  
AC, C11, 54:<sup>#</sup>385; translated in Burpee 1927 : 85n, extract.
11. Morton 1939: 166.
12. Morton 1939: 166-167.
13. Nute 1943: 27, 65.

14. Crouse 1924.
15. Thwaites 1896-1901 LV: facing page 94; Tucker 1942: Plate 1.
16. Skinner 1911: 117; Mandelbaum 1940.
17. Nasatir 1952.
18. Villiere du Terrage 1925.
19. Villiere du Terrage 1925: 45.
20. Nasatir 1952.
21. M. Wedel 1972-1973.
22. Villiere du Terrage 1925: 126.

## Chapter 2

1. Nute 1943: 15.
2. Innis 1930: 123.
3. Morton 1939: 205.
4. ← Roy 1922: facsimile opposite p. 78.
5. La Vérendrye to the Minister, October 31, 1744. AC, C11e, 16: 280-290; published in Margry 1879-1886 VI: 583-584; translated in Burpee 1927: 432-435.
6. Morton 1939: 168.
7. ← Roy 1922: facsimile opposite p. 88.

8. Morton 1939: 168.
9. Trémaudan 1920.
10. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, September 1, 1729. AC, C11, 51: 135; translated in Thwaites 1908 XVIII: 167.
11. Coquart to [Father Castel], Quebec, October 15, 1750. BN, Mes. Fr., n.a., 9286: 240; calendared in Surry 1926-1928.
12. Jones 1893; Roy 1927.
13. Morton 1939: <sup>168-169,</sup> citing Hudson's Bay Company archives.
14. De Noyon, Mémoire, 1750. AC, C11, 52: 288: cited in Morton 1939: 169.
15. Morton 1939: 169.
16. Copy in AC, C11e, 16: 131: calendared in Surry 1926-1928.
17. Gonor to Beauharnois, November 3, 1728. ASH, 5: No. 20; BN, Mss, fr., n. a., 2550: 123 [Margry copy]; calendared in Surry 1926-1928.
18. La Vérendrye, Mémoire, [Quebec?], October 10, 1730. AC, F3, 11: 304; translated in Burpee 1927 : 43-63.
19. La Vérendrye, Mémoire, October 10, 1730.
20. [Map of North America, 1730?] BN, Estampes - v<sup>d</sup> 22; Karpinski photostats.

21. Charlevoix to the Minister, May, 1731. ASH, 115-11: No. 9, copy; translated in Burpee 1927 : 73-81.

22. Morton 1939: 172.

23. La Vérendrye to Maurepas, Michilimackinac, August 1, 1731. AC, C11e, 16: 134; translated in Burpee 1927 : 70-72.

24. Prud'homme 1916; Morton 1939: 174; Nute 1950: 7.

25. La Vérendrye to Beauharnois, Ft. St. Charles, May 25, 1733. AC, C11e, 16: 151; ASH, 115-11: No. 9, extract; translated in Burpee 1927 : 100-102.

26. Carte d'une partie du Lac Superieur... [1733 ?] BSH, B4044. No. 85, in color; Karpinski photostats. Tracings or drawings derived from this map, both inaccurate, and both misleading, are in Morice 1910 I: 44, and Burpee 1927 : Plate VII, opposite p. 488. Libby's 1941: Map 2, opposite p. 234, is derived from part of the drawing in Burpee 1927 , and obscures the matter still further.

27. Morton 1939: 177.

28. Morton 1939: 179.

29. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, September 28, 1733. ASH, 115-11: No. 9; BN, Mes. fr., n.a., 2552: 73, extract; translated in Burpee 1927 : 102-110.

30. La Vérendrye, Mémoire in the form of a journal of events at Ft. St. Charles, May 27, 1733 - July 12, 1734.

AE, Mem. et. Doc. Amer., 8: 46; AC, Clle, 16: 173, extract; translated in Burpee 1927 : 133-192. Much the same information appears in a letter of July 23, 1735, from La J meraye to Beauharnois, a copy of which has been preserved. ASH, 115-11: No. 9, copy; translation in Burpee 1927: 199-201. Since La J meraye's statements were derived from La V rendrye's interviews with the Assiniboin during La J meraye's absence, the latter document is not primary evidence.

31. There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that any of the tribes along the Missouri to which this passage might allude (the Mandan, Hidatsa, or Arikara) were aware of either peas or oats at this early date, although their use of corn and beans is incontestable (Will and Hyde 1917). In speculation, we may only offer that the term "peas" may have alluded to the consumption of immature beans.

32. An excellent summary of native agriculture along the Missouri River is in Will and Hyde (1917).

33. The Assiniboin may have been referring to antelope in their reference to "goats," which were certainly never domesticated. As for the "domestic fowls" which these groups are alleged to have kept, there is no other evidence - historical or archaeological - that this was so.



34. Although game was sometimes trapped in pits, we have no evidence that moose were so captured by the village tribes along the Missouri River.

35. For a synopsis of Mandan villages and dwellings (which were closely approximated by the neighboring Arikara and Hidatsa), see Wood (1967: 14-17). The "subterranean passage" the Assiniboin speak of is another bit of folklore which found its way into their accounts.

36. This centralization of political organization is clearly at variance with the autonomy of the individual villages along the upper Missouri River.

37. This description of the bull boat, the tub-shaped watercraft used by virtually all Plains tribes, is one of the more precise observations in the Assiniboin account.

38. Parkman 1897; Morton 1939; T. C. Blegen 1937, and others.

39. Morton 1939: 182.

40. Morton 1939: 181<sup>n</sup>.

41. Morton 1939: 182; Crouse 1928 b.

42. Beauharnois to Maurepas [after July, 1734], accompanying La Vérendrye's Mémoire, 1734-1735. Not separately calendared in Surry 1926-1928; translated in Burpee 1927: 117-133.

43. Father Luc François Nau to Father Bonin, Sault St. Louis, October 2, 1735; translated in Jones 1893: 66.

44. Beauharnois to Maurepas, Quebec, October 8, 1734. AC C11e, 16: [166?]; not separately calendared in Surry 1926-1928; translated in Burpee 1927: 110-116.

45. Beauharnois to Maurepas, Quebec, October 8, 1734. AC, C11e, 16: 169; ASH, 115-11: No. 9, extract; translated in Burpee 1927: 202-206.

46. Beauharnois to Maurepas, October 8, 1734.

47. La Vérendrye to the Minister, Quebec, October 12, 1734. AC, C11e, 16: 166; translated in Burpee 1927: 193-195.

48. Jones 1893; Roy 1927.

49. Aulneau to Father Faye, Quebec, April 25, 1735. ← Roy 1927; translated in Jones 1893: 33.

50. Aulneau to Father Bonin, Quebec, April 29, 1735. ← Roy 1927; translated in Jones 1893: 48. Kino's great map first appeared in 1705, in the famous Jesuit Lettres édifiantes et curieuses and elsewhere (Bolton 1919 I: 18). The map appearing in the Order's Mémoires de Trevoux for 1705 is reproduced in Bolton 1919 I: frontispiece; see also Wheat 1957 I: 75-76, 203).

51. La Vérendrye, Mémoire, October 31, 1744. AC, C11e, 16: 282; ASH, 5: No. 17; translated in Burpee 1927: 435-455.

52. La Vérendrye to Beauharnois, Mémoire in the form of a journal, June 2, 1736 - August 3, 1737. AC F3, 12: 248; ASH, 115-11: No. 9; translated in Burpee 1927 : 213-262.

53. Morton 1939: 185.

54. Morton 1939: 185-186.

55. Anonymous 1908; Paquin 1911; Prud'homme 1916.

The skeletal remains were excavated in 1908 by a party of Jesuits from the College of St. Boniface, Manitoba, and were taken to the college with other objects found. There, in 1921, they were destroyed by a fire at the college.

56. La Vérendrye Mémoire<sup>e</sup>, June 2, 1736 - August 3, 1737.

57. La Vérendrye Mémoire<sup>e</sup>, June 2, 1736 - August 3, 1737.

58. ASH, 4044B, No. 39; photostat in Public Archives of Canada; not in Karpinski photostats. Tracings have been published in various places: Winchell 1884, Plate 3; Marcel 1893 I: No. 37; Burpee 1927 : Plate III, opposite p. 116, and elsewhere, with the statement - apparently correct, but <sup>appearing</sup> not on the original - "joint à la lettre de M. de Beauharnois du 14 8bre 1737."

59. Burpee 1927 : 249 n., citing J. B. Tyrrell; Bougainville in Margry 1867: 187, gives the name in slightly different form: Jatihilinine.

60. La Vérendrye, Mémoire, June 2, 1736 - August 3, 1737.

61. La Vérendrye to the Minister, Quebec, October 1, 1737. AC, C11e, 16: 192; ASH, 115-11: No. 9; translated in Burpee 1927 : 266-269.

62. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, October 14, 1737. AC. C11, 67: 168; translated in Burpee 1927 : 271-273, extract.

### Chapter 3

1. Brymner 1890; Le Sueur in Burpee 1927 ; Haxo 1941.

2. Parkman 1897 : 17<sup>n</sup>.

3. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, August 14, 1739. AC, C11e, 16: 220; translated in Burpee 1927 : 363, extract.

4. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, October 6, 1739. AC, C11e, 16: 222; translated in Burpee 1927 : 364-365, extract, "accompanying an extract of a 'journal' of La Vérendrye"; for this, see Note 5.

5. Extract of a journal of La Vérendrye, no place or date. AC, C11e, 16: 229; translated in Burpee 1927 : 366-373.

6. Reid 1965: 117.

7. For more details concerning the history of this monument, see the For<sup>e</sup>word.

8. This trade has been described by Ewers (1954) and by Wood (1972).

9. Burpee 1942: 411, shows that the value of the old French league, used earlier by him (1927) and by others — of 2.42 miles — may be in error, and that there is good authority for calculating it at three English miles.

10. Reid 1965: 119.

11. For example, Libby 1908.

12. Haxo 1941: 251.

13. Reid 1965: 118-119.

14. Upham 1906: 278; 1909: 49; Libby 1908: 503.

15. Libby 1941: 232.

16. Reid 1965: 118.

17. Upham 1895: 35-42, and Plate 30.

18. Vickers 1945, 1948; Capes 1963; Syms 1978.

19. Upham 1895: 645, and Plate 30; Montgomery 1910.

Calf Mountain is in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 32, Township 2, Range 7 West.

20. Upham 1895: 645.

21. Hewes 1949; Neuman 1975; Syms 1978.

22. Vickers 1951: 8.

23. Syms 1977, 1978.

24. Upham 1895: 41, and Plate 30.

25. Vickers 1945: 91.

26. Ellis and Shafer 1943: 15-17.

27. Libby 1908; Robinson 1914a, b; DeLand 1914; Reid 1965.

28. Libby 1908; Robinson 1914a, b; DeLand 1914.
29. Will and Spinden 1906; Will and Hyde 1917;  
Will 1917; and others.
30. Margry 1852: 1410.
31. Parkman 1897; Burpee 1908 and 1927; Will and  
Spinden 1906; and others.
32. Libby 1908: 502.
33. Libby 1908: 503.
34. Dixon 1909: 500.
35. Libby 1908: 503.
36. The French places (open squares - cf. Spanish  
plaza) was first translated "squares" by Brymner (1890).  
See Bowers (1950) for details of the ceremonial lodge and  
for related ceremonies which took place in the plaza.
37. Libby 1909: 58.
38. Libby 1916a: 144.
39. Libby 1916a: 144.
40. Dixon 1909; Will 1917; Reid 1965.
41. Will 1914: 291.
42. Bougainville in Margry 1867: 54-55.
43. Libby 1908: 506; Dixon 1909: 503; and Will 1917: 292.
44. Will 1917: 291.
45. Will 1917: 293.
46. Will 1917: 293.
47. Will 1917: 293.
48. Will 1917: 293.

49. Will 1917: 294.
50. Libby 1916a: 151.
51. Upham 1909: 50.
52. DeLand 1914: 167 and map; Robinson 1914a: 90 and map; and 1914b and map opposite p. 146.
53. Will 1917: 295.
54. Reid 1965: 124.
55. Woolworth 1956; Metcalf 1963; Smith 1972.
56. Muller 1968.
57. W. R. Wedel 1948: 50.
58. Will 1924: 203.
59. Libby 1908: 504n, 505, corrected the error in Brymner's rendering of these dates.
60. Libby 1908: 505.
61. Dixon 1909: 501.
62. Dixon 1909: 502.
63. Libby 1916a: 152.
64. Will 1917: 294.
65. Libby 1916a: 152, and map facing p. 388.
66. Reid, personal communication, 1951.
67. Reid 1965: 126.
68. For example, Adams 1943; Crouse 1956; Smurr 1952.
69. Powell 1936; announcements also appeared in the Minneapolis Journal, July 19, 1936; and in the Fargo Forum, December 6, 1936.

70. Hecker 1942 MS; Reid 1965: 125-126; Will and Hecker 1944: 79-80.

71. Hecker 1942 MS.

72. Will and Hecker 1944: 80.

73. James E. Sperry, personal communication.

74. DeLand 1908: 290; Taylor 1932: 303; and Will and Hecker 1944: 81.

#### Chapter 4

1. Ordinance of Hocquart in the case between de Lorme, plaintiff, and d'Ailleboust, Sieur de Coulonges, defendant [involving La Vérendrye], Montreal, June 12, 1739. AC, Clle, 16: 240 [copy]; translated in Burpee 1927: 515-520. Surry 1926-1928 errs in giving the date as June 12, 1741.

2. Extract from journal of La Vérendrye, dated "1740" in pencil, no place. AC, Clle, 16: 229; translated in Burpee 1927: 366-373.

3. Coquart to Father [Castel], Quebec, October 15, 1750. BN, Mss. Fr., n.a., 9286: 240, Margry copy. Calendared in Surry 1926-1928; original not known.



4. La Vérendrye to Maurepas, Ft. La Reine, May 12, 1742. AC, C11e, 16: 253; translated in Burpee 1927 : 377-379.

5. C. L. Wilson, personal communication, 1951.

6. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, September 25, 1741. AC, C11e, 75: 182; transcript in Public Archives of Canada; not published in Burpee 1927 .

## Chapter 5

1. Margry 1879-1886 VI: 598-611.

2. Parkman cites a draft transcribed for him, in preparing his account, "from an original in the Dépôt des Cartes de la Marine" - perhaps that now in the Service - and a duplicate, preserved in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères, the latter as that published in Margry (Parkman 1897: 25n). The calendar of the Paris Archives lists only the draft now in the Service Hydrographique, as ASH, 5: No. 18, under the dates "April 9, 1742-June 20, 1743" (Surry 1926-1928).

3. Margry 1879-1886 and Burpee 1927 .
4. Stevenson 1914; A. H. Blegan 1925; Le Sueur in Burpee 1927 .
5. Morton 1939.
6. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, October 27, 1744. AC, C11e, 16: 277; translated in Stevenson 1914: 359-360, and Burpee 1927 : 402-406.
7. La Vérendrye Mémoire, annexed to La Vérendrye to Maurepas, no place, October 31, 1744. AC, C11e, 16: 282, ASH, 5, No. 17; translated in Burpee 1927 : 435-455.
8. Kalm 1937 II: 439.
9. Kalm 1937 II: 440.
10. Kalm 1937 II: 440.
11. Kalm 1937 II: 443.
12. Kalm 1937 II: 441.
13. Kalm 1937 II: 442.
14. Kalm 1937 II: 442.
15. Thwaites 1908: 168n.
16. Bougainville in Margry 1867: 39-84; and in P. G. Roy 1924: 42-70.
17. Bougainville in Margry 1867: 54.
18. Bougainville in Margry 1867: 54.
19. Thwaites 1908: 188n.

20. Legardeur de St. Pierre in Margry 1879-1886 VI:  
644.
21. Hodge 1907<sup>-1910</sup><sub>^</sub> II: 18, apparently errs in so identifying  
this group.
22. Neill 1875.
23. Thwaites 1908: 188n.
24. Clark 1885: 424.
25. Hodge 1907<sup>-1910</sup><sub>^</sub> I: 47; and Will and Hyde 1917: 181.
26. Parkman 1897: 25.
27. Wood and Downer 1977.
28. Dobbs 1744: 35.
29. Cf. Hodge 1907<sup>-1910</sup><sub>^</sub> II: 570.
30. Thwaites 1908: 189n.
31. Bowers 1965.
32. Lewis and Clark, in Thwaites 1904-1905 I: 220;  
Loisel in Abel 1939: 239.
33. Bowers 1965.
34. Parkman 1897: 26.
35. Prud'homme 1916.
36. Thwaites 1908: 189n.
37. Thwaites 1908: 189n.
38. Lewis and Clark, in Thwaites 1904-1905 I: 190;  
and Abel 1939: 98.

39. Abel 1939: 98n; *Coves* 1897 I: 384.
40. Lewis and Clark, in Thwaites 1904-1905 I: 30.
41. Thwaites 1908: 189n.
42. Hodge 1907<sup>-1910</sup> I: 594.  
    ^
43. Thomas 1940: 15.
44. Bougainville in Margry 1867: 55; Thwaites 1908: 190.
45. Garraghan 1940.
46. Margry 1852: 1410.
47. Margry 1879-1886 VI: viii-ix; this edition includes  
a special introduction.
48. Parkman 1888; it was republished in 1892 and  
← revised in 1897.
49. Neill 1892; Burpee 1908; Upham 1909; and others.
50. Parkman 1897: 29-30.
51. DeLand 1914.
52. Robinson 1914a; 1914b.
53. Robinson 1914a: 146.
54. Thwaites 1908: 44.
55. Robinson 1914a.
56. Robinson 1914b: 147.
57. Robinson 1914b: 148.
58. Robinson 1914b: 149.
59. Robinson 1914b: 149-150.

60. See, for example, Lehmer 1971 and Lehmer and Jones 1968 for archaeological data on this point. There are also elusive ethnographic and linguistic data, as Douglas Parks noted in a letter of April 5, 1978 to the editor:

Gilmore (1927: 345) listed 12 Arikara bands, each of which had a sacred bundle. Presumably the name of each band and bundle was the same. One of those he listed was naka:núsč, which he translated Little Cherries. To date I have been unable to verify this name with contemporary informants. Nevertheless, the name he gave for the Little Cherries is etymologically sound, translating literally as 'little chokecherries.' Given its linguistic soundness and Gilmore's general reliability as a field worker, I feel reasonably confident that there was indeed once such a band or group, even though it is not remembered today. In the 1920s, of course, Gilmore was working with informants who were old men then and were more familiar with the names of old groups or tribal subdivisions, although they too must have had faulty recollections of tribal subgroupings of a century or more earlier. Indeed, throughout the historic period there has been confusion

in band names, since no two recorded lists give exactly the same ones. It is also possible that naka:núsc̣ is a village, rather than a band, name. In any case, it undoubtedly designates some Arikara group in the late 18th and/or 19th century.

61. For example, Libby 1916a.
62. Robinson 1916: 377.
63. Will and Hyde 1917: 43n; Will 1917: 297.
64. Wood 1971.
65. For example, Swanton in Strong 1935: 28n.

## Chapter 6

1. Morton 1939: 198
2. Beauharnois to the Minister, Quebec, October 20, 1743. AC, C11e, 79: 195; calendared in Surry 1926-1928; transcript in the Public Archives of Canada.
3. La Verendrye to the Minister, Quebec, October 31, 1744. AC, C11e, 16: 280-290; translated in Stevenson 1914: 361-362; and Burpee 1927: 432-435. The letter was accompanied by a memoir of the same date, AC, C11e, 16: 282; ASH, 5, No. 17; translated in Burpee 1927: 435-455.

4. Morton 1939; and others.
5. Brebner 1933: 359.
6. Morton 1939: 205.
7. Morton 1939: 206.

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