

# Souvenir Coins of the Far West 1950 - 1955

by R.C. Bell

## APPENDIX C

### HISTORY OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

In 1666 two Canadians, Medart Chouard and his brother-in-law Pierre Esprit Radisson, visited the court of King Charles II at Oxford, and persuaded the king's cousin, Prince Rupert, to invest money in a venture to trade for furs on the shores of Hudson Bay. In 1668 two ships, the **Eaglet** and the **Nonsuch** set sail, but the **Eaglet** was damaged and was forced to turn back. The **Nonsuch** wintered at Fort Charles, later renamed Rupert House, and obtained £90,000 worth of beaver pelts from the Indians.

In 1669 Prince Rupert formed a company, and on May 2, 1670 the Governor (Prince Rupert) and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson Bay, received its charter from the king. The company obtained what is now the provinces of Quebec and Ontario north of the Laurentians, all Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the southern half of Alberta, and the south-east corner of the North West Territories. "Rupert's Land" was more than a million square miles of territory. Payment to the crown as a symbol of obligation was "Two elks and two black beavers whenever the king or his successors entered the territory". This obligation was first paid two hundred and fifty years later when the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, passed through Winnipeg on the way to his ranch in Alberta.

The new company under Prince Rupert's able direction was highly successful, and trading posts were built at Rupert House, Moose, and Albany factories, and at York Factory on the west shore.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century there were increasing clashes with the French traders, and forts on both sides were burned and rebuilt many times. When Canada passed into the possession of England in 1763, the Hudson Bay Adventurers received a stimulus to explore the continent. In 1770 a young trader, Samuel Hearne, left Fort Prince of Wales and travelled north reaching in July 1771 the mouth of the Coppermine river flowing into the Arctic Ocean.

In 1783 several fur traders in Montreal combined to form the North West Company who became vigorous rivals of the Hudson Bay Adventurers. Fur kings in Montreal built themselves mansions, and gave banquets at the Beaver Club, a select fraternity of wealthy merchants. While the Churchill, Nelson, and Hayes rivers, formed the highways for the Hudson Bay Adventurers inland from Hudson Bay, the Nor'westers routes lay further south. Both companies built forts throughout Rupert's Land, often close together. Some times the rivalry was friendly, but gradually the competition for furs became more bitter. Both companies had forts on the Red and Assiniboine rivers, and on branches of the Saskatchewan river which formed the main route into Rupert's Land. The Nor'westers also established posts on the Athabaska river.

In the summer of 1789 a young Scot, Alexander Mackenzie of the North West Company, set out from Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabaska with two canoes and guided by an Indian chief. They reached Great Slave Lake, and then onto the broad river that was to bear Mackenzie's name, until they reached the shore of the Arctic Ocean.

In 1792 MacKenzie built a small log fort on the Peace River, and wintered there, preparing to try to reach the Pacific Ocean in the spring. His voyageurs built a huge

canoe, to carry provisions, arms, trade goods and a crew of voyageurs and Indians, as well as MacKenzie himself and his young clerk, Alexander Mackay. They set off up the Peace river, which became increasingly wild and difficult as they journeyed westwards towards its source. Eventually they crossed the mountains and reached the sea, Lat. 52° 20' 48" N. on July 22, 1793. Soon fur traders Simon Fraser and John Stuart explored further into the mountainous country, which they called New Caledonia, and claimed the territory for England. In 1808 Simon Fraser was sent to explore a river thought to be the upper reaches of the Columbia, but eventually was found to be more northerly; and later was named the Fraser river after Simon's journey of incredible hardship along its course.

When the nineteenth century opened the western wilderness was the battleground between the English of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Scots-Canadians of Montreal. The Nor'westers were limited in southern expansion when England and the United States agreed upon a boundary line from the Great Lakes to the Rockies along the 49th parallel. West of the mountains the Oregon country remained open to all traders of both nations.

Conflicts in the Red River region developed into fierce competition for furs between the two companies, and with both facing bankruptcy they were forced to unite. In 1821 they were reformed under the name and charter of the Hudson's Bay Company. The new company soon became the ruler of New Caledonia and the Oregon country as well. The headquarters were in London, England, but a governor, George Simpson, was appointed to control the whole vast fur realm in Canada. He brought order out of chaos, amalgamating the posts and men of the two companies into one organization. Redundant posts were closed, trade with the Indians was based on fair dealing, and the liquor trade was severely curtailed.

York Factory on Hudson Bay became a great entrepôt for furs and trade goods. Off shore ships from England anchored in summer bringing supplies and returning with furs brought down the rivers from the interior in canoes and York boats. The yearly journeys by the brigades through the Rockies and the Pacific North West were made by canoe and pack horse to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia river, the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company in the west. The buildings were enclosed within a palisade twenty feet high. Around the fort some of the inhabitants grew wheat and raised cattle to supply the fort and others in the region.

In early fall the brigades of hunters went southwards into California, Idaho, Nevada and Montana. French Canadian hunters and Indian trappers set off on Indian ponies, to return a year later; while the brigades set out by canoe up the rivers northwards into New Caledonia. Part of the journey through the mountains was made with pack horses.

The era of the fur lords was a vivid page in Canadian history, and the Red River settlements formed an oasis of civilization in the vastness of the prairie, mountains and forest. The men of the fur trade opened the west for others to till the land, and tame the wilderness. In the 1850's the isolation of the Red River district began to be invaded. American pioneers were crossing the western plains of the United States in long trains of prairie schooners, following the Oregon Trail to the Columbia river. Some settled in the new state of Minnesota, and St. Paul became a railroad terminus. The Hudson's Bay Company then found it easier to transport their furs to St. Paul and send them east by rail, than to carry them along the rivers to Hudson Bay for the long sea route to England.

The pioneer wagon-trains reaching Fort Vancouver on the Columbia found food and supplies, and began to farm the rich Willamette valley. Disputes arose over the ownership of the land between Mexican California and Russian Alaska, but in 1846 the Oregon boundary was settled between England and the United States, the 49th parallel becoming the boundary to the sea, deflected southwards to include the

whole of Vancouver Island in British hands, but the Hudson's Bay Company posts on the Columbia became American property.

Before this settlement was ratified the Hudson's Bay Company sent Chief Factor James Douglas to build Fort Victoria at the southern end of Vancouver Island, and when the posts on the Columbia were given up, Fort Victoria became the new headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company in the northwest.

In 1850 England appointed James Douglas to be the governor of the new colony of Vancouver Island, though he still remained in charge of the company's affairs at Fort Victoria. Ships from England sailed round the Horn to bring supplies to Fort Victoria for all the company's western posts. The company's little paddlewheel steamer, **Beaver** was the first steam vessel on the northwest Pacific coast. Wheat and cattle were raised on company lands, grist mills and saw mills were operated for the settlements. When coal was discovered at Nanaimo the company imported miners and went into coal mining.

In 1859 the Hudson's Bay Company's charter expired and petitions were sent to the British Parliament not to renew it by many who thought that half a continent was too large a reserve for the scattered agents of a trading company and a few thousand Indians. A decision was made that the northwest should belong to Canada as soon as the young government was strong enough to take it over.

The Hudson's Bay Company continued its rule over Assiniboia for ten more years, though with lessening control, and in 1869 gave up its two hundred-year rule of Rupert's Land. Traders gave way to settlers, but the fur trade continued without a monopoly. The company's boats became carriers of freight and passengers on the rivers; sternwheelers began to connect Lake Winnipeg with Fort Edmonton on the Saskatchewan river; fur trading post and supply depots became general stores, serving the developing settlements; and imperceptibly 'The Bay' changed from a wholesale business in blankets, household goods, tobacco and whiskey, into the unique chain of department stores in the major cities of Canada that it has become today.

#### APPENDIX D

R.C. Willey Esq. added the following information when reading a rough draft of this book.

Universal Emblems of Edmonton struck souvenir dollars for the following towns in 1967 and they are illustrated in Jack Roberts's work on Centennial pieces.

##### **Alder Flats. 1967.**

Obverse: In a plain circle the legend CENTENNIAL VOYAGEURS FIRST STOP in three lines, below which, still within a circle, is GOOD FOR \$1.00 ALDER FLATS outside the circle above; 1867 ALBERTA 1967 below.

Reverse: The centennial symbol of ten triangles on a stem supposed to represent a maple leaf. CENTENNIAL OF THE CANADIAN CONFEDERATION above, LA CENTENAIRE DE LA CONFEDERATION CANADIENNE below. Struck in bronze.

##### **Strome 1967**

Obverse: Within a chain circle the legend: GOOD FOR \$1.00 IN TRADE UNTIL DEC. 31, 1967 in three lines above a Canada goose in flight to the left. VILLAGE OF STROME above; WAVY LAKE below.

Reverse: The Centennial symbolic maple leaf.  
Diesenker, — Manufacturer, Universal Emblems.

##### **Valleyview 1967**

Obverse: A gateway inscribed THE PORTAL TO THE PEACE across the top. The left pillar is dated 1867 and the right 1967. GOOD FOR \$1.00 IN TRADE AT

ANY CO-OPERATING MERCHANT UNTIL SEPT. 30, 1967 in two curved lines above; VALLEYVIEW ALBERTA CANADA in two lines below.

Reverse: Within a small circle the symbolic maple leaf. VALLEYVIEW above, within a circle; CHAMBER OF COMMERCE below, within the circle. The field outside the circle is divided into four parts by lines which if produced, would intersect at the centre. These lines are 45° from the perpendicular. Each quadrant contains a device. Above is a fish, with the legend: BIG FISH At the right is an oil derrick and a tree, with the words OIL above and LUMBER below. The bottom and left segments were blurred in the available photograph. Struck in bronze. Manufacturer, Universal Emblems.

Wister's pioneer collection **Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads** published in 1910 contains Whoopee Ti Yi Yo:-

Oh, you'll be soup for Uncle Sam's Injuns;  
"It's beef, heap beef", I hear them cry.  
Git along, git along, git along little dogies  
You're going to be beef steers by and by.

Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies,  
It's your misfortune, and none of my own.  
Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies,  
For you know Wyoming will be your new home.

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## No More Pound Notes

November 12, 1984 — In his autumn statement to the British Parliament today, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, M.P. announced that the Bank of England would cease the issue of the one pound note after December 31, 1984.

It is expected that 1985 will see the gradual attrition of the one pound note and its replacement by the one pound coin, first issued by the British Royal Mint in April 1983. While public acceptance of the coin has been initially slow, there has never been any question of its need for use in vending machines, transportation, etc. The longevity of the coin versus the note also is an important factor in the economics of producing circulating currency.

Interestingly, the demise of the note will coincide with the new effigy of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, designed by Raphael Maklouf, which will appear on Britain's coinage from January 1, 1985.

The Chancellor also announced that the ½ penny coin, which the British Royal Mint stopped producing on March 29, 1984 will be demonetised on December 31, 1984. No mention was made of a date for demonetisation of the one pound note, but it is broadly expected that it will continue to circulate for about another year.

In the same statement, the Chancellor indicated that a new 20 pound note will be issued in the United Kingdom; details of which are to be announced later.