I. S. MacLaren

# Splendor sine occasu
## Salvaging Boat Encampment[1]

**I**

Driving a rented car 150 kilometres up the Columbia River valley north from Revelstoke, I was in search of Boat Encampment, a rendezvous point on the transcontinental fur trade route of the early nineteenth century. Few know of this place today or realize its symbolic value. Canada could never have extended from sea to sea if a canoe route across northern North America had not been opened, and Boat Encampment marks the place on the Columbia River that could be reached by six days of portaging from the eastern slopes of the Rockies. Many North Americans think of the Columbia as a USAmerican River—roughly two-thirds of its length lies below the forty-ninth parallel—but it is born in British Columbia, gathering itself from the meltwater of the Canadian Rockies before hurtling into Washington state 725 kilometres from its headwaters. Two of its ten major tributaries—Kootenay and Okanagan rivers—lie mainly in Canada, while the other eight—Wenatchee, Spokane, Yakima, Snake, Deschutes, Willamette, Cowlitz, and Lewis rivers—drain parts of seven states— Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Wyoming, and Utah. Its basin covers about 67.3 trillion square kilometres. This is the most hyrdo-electrically developed watershed in the world, with more than 400 dams and many other structures, all working to harness the estimated twenty-one million kilowatts of generating capacity.

Searching for Boat Encampment was going to be an odd experience, for I knew that I wouldn't see the place, but Highway 23 (Fig. 1) takes you to
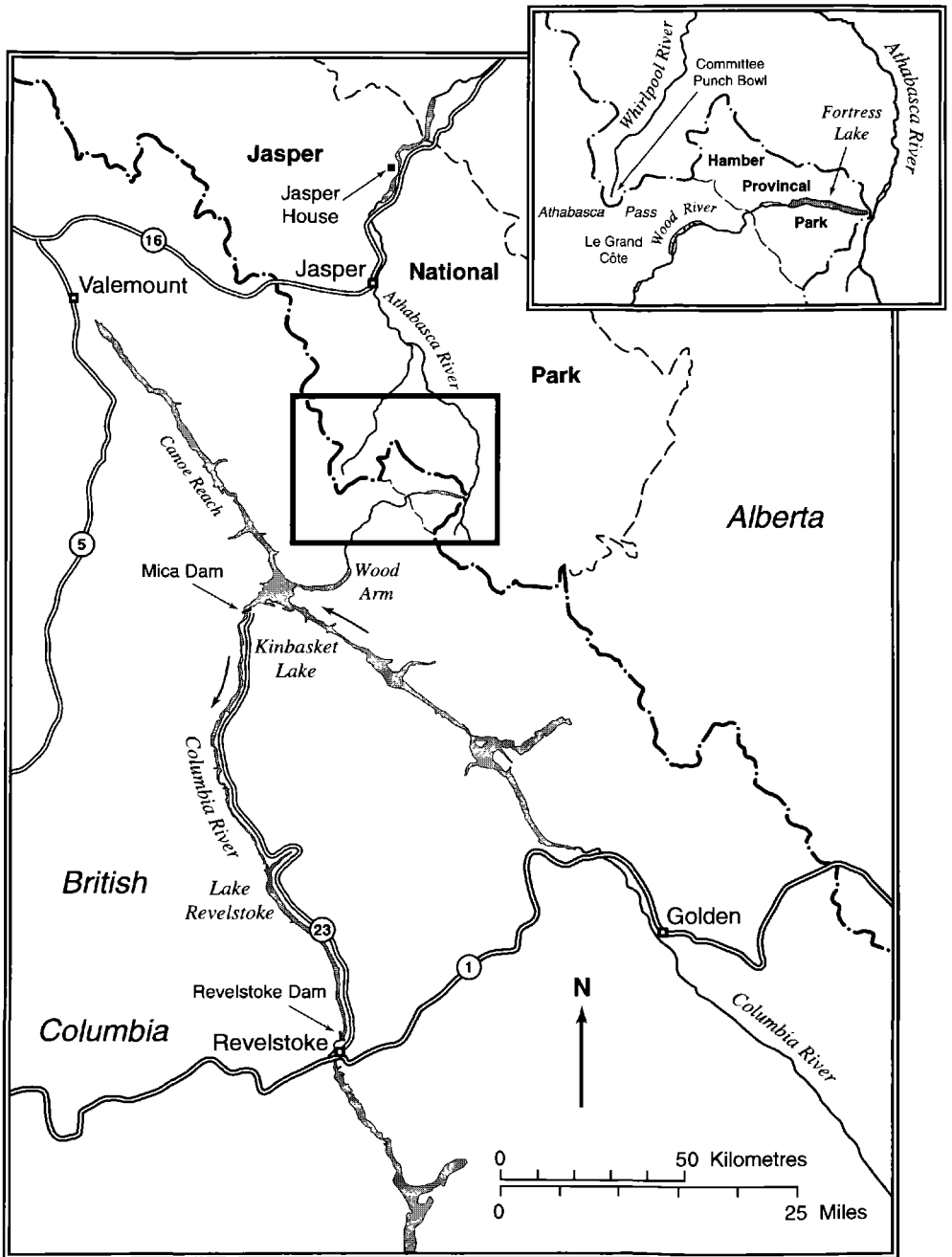
Fig. 1. Present-Day Map of the northernmost Extent of the Columbia River, Kinbasket Lake, Athabasca Portage, and Environs.

where it was and it doesn't go anywhere else. As I drove, I listened to Bill Frisell's cd, *gone, just like a train,* and bathed in a strong, late-April sun, the road almost entirely to myself. It seemed an effortless mechanical experience, and nothing feels quite so effortless as the first 30,000 kilometres in a North American mid-size on a traffic-free highway—the consummate illusion conjured up in television ads. But I wondered why Frisell's bluesy guitar seemed so apposite in the Columbia valley. One tune, "Nature's Symphony," has a nasty edge to it, while the title song ranges through a dose of discords, punctuated by shot-gun-like reports that frighten motoring listeners into thinking something has hit the car, or *vice-versa.*

Those sheer white parallelograms of clear-cut start getting to you after a while. The Columbia River valley was never so populated as it was three decades ago, when the dams above Revelstoke were being built, but now it feels eerily abandoned. The hydro lines and clear-cuts prove that humans are consuming it, but we are absentee consumers. The valley itself yields utilities, but they are not consumed there and few people make their home in that stretch of the valley. No deeper irony exists on Hwy 23 than the sign warning travellers that "no services" are available. *Splendor sine occasu* is the motto of the province of British Columbia. It is supposed to be translated as "Radiance without setting." But this valley put me in mind of one wag's alternative translation: "splendour without any occasion for it."[2]

The conversion of the Columbia River into a virtual river has been consummate. It came at the cost of avaricious thinking, which led to, among other things, the greatest bond default in USAmerican history (White 80). On the Canadian side of the line, British Columbians have long grown used to the mantra that hydroelectricity would emancipate them economically; successive governments felt they had no choice but to continue promulgating a myth that the numbers do not defend. More than a quarter-century ago, provocative BC Liberal Pat McGeer surmised that it was "unlikely that British Columbia will ever make a business out of developing electricity and selling it elsewhere" (65). So tales from the economic realms only serve to exacerbate the bizarre and alienating effect you gain in this valley, and it is deepened by the effect on you of driving along a steep valley near the top of one of its walls, rather than down at its bottom. We're used to roadways inching through a mountain pass, or, if there isn't one, climbing up out of one valley in order to leave it and cross into another, but Hwy 23 perches high above the iceless Columbia, occasionally plunging down near high-water mark only to rise again, more like a coastal than an interior highway.

Even so, coastal highways lead somewhere; after 150 kilometres of Hwy 23, carefree motoring hits Mica Dam (Fig. 1). And ends.

Observing the Columbia River first-hand should come after reading about it. Pick Robin Cody's *Voyage of a Summer Sun*, Blaine Harden's *A River Lost*, or Richard White's *The Organic Machine*; they are all witheringly insightful treatments of the subject. As the nature-*versus*-technology debate goes, Cody's and White's are even-minded. But none of them quite prepared me for this artifice. The Columbia feels, at least in the stretch between Revelstoke and Mica dams, like a fjord rather than a river. In the engineered West, it no longer flows through a valley; it occupies one. Harden refers to its "puddled remains"; the scale of the metaphor is wrong, but the idea is right (Harden 39, 14).[3]

I've now seen all but a few of the Columbia's 1,900 kilometres, but only along two stretches—in the stretch north of Revelstoke, where the valley narrows dramatically, and, ironically, in one of the few remaining free-flow stretches of the river, down near the Hanford Nuclear Reservation—did this weird impression resonate so strongly. Perhaps it was the work of Frisell's teary guitar. But I think not. It was the sense of loss that assailed me more here than elsewhere. I was motoring north after participating in Revelstoke (Fig. 1) at a gathering of ecologists hosted by the Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology. Not an ecologist, I aim to build bridges of environmental history between those who are and those who know about cultural heritage. I welcome White's argument that environmental history must study the relationship of the ecological and cultural heritage of a place, rather than those two subjects independently of one another: one must "do more than write a human history alongside a natural history and call it an environmental history. This would be like writing a biography of a wife, placing it alongside the biography of a husband and calling it the history of a marriage" (10). The gathering in Revelstoke had been promisingly named "Learning from the Past," and I was heartened to meet some ecologists who did see the need to align if not to marry their research to the history of human occupation of the lands they studied and, in the case of some Parks Canada personnel, managed.[4] Because I was driving north from Revelstoke with human history in mind, and because historical human presence in the valley was drowned and contemporary human presence was spectral, I was spooked. I was finding it difficult to gain my historical bearings, let alone learn anything from the pastness of a valley transformed.

**II**

For more than a decade, work on an edition of the painter Paul Kane's field notes and sketches has required travel to most places he visited between 1846 and 1848, when he made a return trip from Toronto to Vancouver Island with Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) brigades. The most dramatic and arduous stretch of the continental fur trade route from York Factory to the Pacific Ocean was *La Grande Traverse*, or Athabasca Portage, which took brigades between two great watersheds, the Athabasca's and the Columbia's, where the rivers come nearest one another without an intervening glacier. For four decades between 1814 and 1855, brigades made this portage over the spine of the continent's Cordillera. Kane travelled over it in November 1846, when he was headed to Fort Vancouver, and in November 1847, when he was returning to Fort Edmonton. He encountered deep snow both times. For westbound brigades, the "entry" to the six-day portage was Mount Edith Cavell, in modern Jasper National Park (Fig. 1).[5] During the fur trade era, it went by the name of *La Montagne de la Grande Traverse*. The loss of this name spelled the loss of most humans' awareness of the fur trade route and the role it played in the making of Canada. Other than a placard hidden away on a stretch of old highway, Jasper National Park offers no historical interpretation of the route. For eastbound brigades, the starting point was Boat Encampment, on the Columbia's northernmost bend (Fig. 2).

Between Fort Edmonton on the prairies and Fort Colvile (Colville, WA) downstream on the Columbia at Kettle Falls, Boat Encampment marked the rendezvous point for the two brigades. Although he did not give it this name, North West Company explorer David Thompson was the first fur trader to camp on this bend. He did so in January 1811 after crossing Athabasca Pass in winter. He named Canoe River, a tributary flowing from the north-northwest into the Columbia on this bend. Canoe Reach (Fig. 1) retains that name today. Wood River (Fig. 1), flowing west into the bend from the Rockies and Athabasca Pass, was not Thompson's choice of name; he named it Flat Heart, "the Men being dispirited" (Tyrrell, ed. 451; Glover, ed. 324; Belyea, ed. 262n).[6] For more than two months, he and his men waited out the winter amid those stands of giant cedar and hemlock, the greatest trees that Thompson had ever seen. Then they fashioned a cedar-plank canoe, and made their way upriver, south, to Kootenae House.

Boat Encampment was a storied place. As the pivotal rendezvous point on the Pacific Slope of the transcontinental canoe route, it witnessed the

Fig. 2. Aerial view of Columbia, Canoe, and Wood Rivers: Boat Encampment. Date unknown. Courtesy BCARS, and Canada, Department of National Defence, Namao AB.

first-ever *regular* crossings of the continent by Euro-North Americans. Many cultures have not lost places so storied. David Thompson is remembered today as the pre-eminent explorer and cartographer of Canada, the northern Lewis and Clark, if you will. Boat Encampment was one of those sites that could be associated directly with this national hero; this association, in combination with the fact that it also served a transcontinental role, suggests that Boat Encampment could bear the burden of national historic site status, national in a way that few other sites in the West could boast of being for the epoque preceding the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885.

When the HBC operated its transcontinental express brigades, often a month or more was spent at Boat Encampment by the brigade coming from the Pacific, waiting for the other to arrive from the prairies. Deep snow in Athabasca Pass, the late arrival of the HBC's ship at Fort Vancouver, or a host of other logistical or natural causes could account for such delays in a system dating from when work proceeded in terms, not in spite, of natural conditions. Accounts that record the rendezvous of the brigades at Boat Encampment invariably feature expressions of relief and even jubilation. It was an isolated transhipment point on the transcontinental route, separated

from any post by the dangerous rapids of the malevolent Columbia down-stream and the punishing *Grande Traverse* over Athabasca Pass;[7] the gloom of the surrounding mountains exerted itself psychologically on the men camped there, waiting. It flattened many a heart. And game could prove scarce, rendering a long sojourn there risky. But, in time, it came to possess a continent-wide symbolism unmatched anywhere else in the interior.

With the help of local historians in Jasper (Fig. 1), I had located the sites of six watercolour sketches that Kane made in the mountains on the eastern slope while he travelled up the Athabasca River valley and then, beginning *La Grande Traverse*, up the valley of its tributary, the Whirlpool River (Fig. 1). This took him to Athabasca Pass and, at its crest, the famous tarn, Committee Punch Bowl (Fig. 1), which bestrides the continental divide (of course, the Alberta/British Columbia border bisects that tarn today). I sup-pose that I was feeling spoiled. What better way to preserve historical land-scapes than by turning them into a national park? That was not one of the motives of park-makers in the late nineteenth century,[8] but the creation of Jasper Forest Park on 14 September 1907, also, as it happened, resulted in preserving the upper Athabasca River undammed, this in Alberta, a province as determined as any to develop any and all resources. As well, the formation of the park preserved the historical traces of the eastern portion of *La Grande Traverse*. Sites of kekule-houses and the Valley of the Twisted Trees—evidence of the regular transmontane presence of Shuswap business travellers and their families—can still be sought and identified, and they necessarily leave one pondering the lostness of storied places that, without knowing it at the conscious level, Canada has already cashiered in the head-long pursuit of progress.

Once you leave Kane Meadow (known as *Campement du Fusil* during the fur trade), pass up McGillivray Ridge, walk around the west shore of Committee Punch Bowl, and approach *Le Grand Côte* (Fig. 1) to descend to the Columbia watershed in the valley of Wood River, you leave history; or it leaves you. First you hit clear-cut; then you hit damned rivers and bloated river valleys. Scuba gear and wet suit are required apparel if your search is for Boat Encampment. For well over one thousand kilometres, you travel in the Columbia valley with little sign of early nineteenth-century history. Only long after leaving British Columbia and after passing through much of Washington state, only, that is, when you come to tidewater below the Columbia River Gorge, and, soon after, the reconstructed Fort Vancouver, can you regain some sense of the once mighty, and mightily impressive,

transcontinental fur trade route. A vestigial remembrance of Fort Okanagan, but no sign of Fort Shepard or Fort Colvile or Fort Walla Walla; no sign of either of the Dalles des Morts, or of Kettle Falls, the Great (Celilo) Falls, the Dalles, and the Cascades. Places where human labour had created knowledge and concentrated cultural memory have disappeared, drowned beneath what in 1926 USAmerican secretary of commerce Herbert Hoover called the principle of maximum utilization. In the Columbia, nature and, with it, human history have been "maimed . . . for the sake of subsidized prosperity" (qtd. in White 54, 56; Harden 15). The only time that any water is permitted to escape over Grand Coulee Dam occurs each summer evening. The falling water forms a white screen on to which a laser light show is projected that enchants tourists with the mighty Columbia River's history of progress. All around the town of Grand Coulee, loud speakers broadcast the narrative unrelentingly.

This technological transformation of a river that dropped as much as a metre per kilometre in many long stretches allows for nothing more than mimicry of the past: late each winter, the US Corp of Engineers draws down Lake Roosevelt in anticipation of spring runoff, usually revealing the foundations of old Fort Colvile and a series of rocky islands that defined Kettle Falls. Enough of Hayes Island, just above the falls, emerges to permit a few Colville and Lakes men to paddle over to it, set up a camp, fast, pray for a week, and then hop off to hold a mock first salmon feast.

Kinbasket Lake (Fig. 1) is named for a Shuwap man. It is the reservoir that formed behind Mica Dam and that submerged Boat Encampment nearly three decades ago.[9] Three decades is only one less than the tenure of Boat Encampment's regular use by transcontinental fur trade brigades. Appreciating as much made me realize that cultural history generates a seductive nostalgia all its own. You have to keep remembering that fur trade entrepreneurs seldom showed a higher regard for the particularities of place or environment than did mid-twentieth-century politicians and government agencies. It was then as it seems now: get across the mountains and you deserve all you can take. When, in the early 1960s, Premier W.A.C. Bennett hitched the economic future of British Columbia to the star of hydroelectric development, whether he knew it or not, he aligned himself with the sort of exclusiveness of vision that Sir George Simpson practised as inland governor of the HBC when it rivalled the greatest companies in history for territorial control of the globe. The development of both the fur trade and hydroelectricity produced histories of profligacy.

Still, the fur trade's rapacity left its trace, one of many human traces that Columbia River plumbing began drowning more than sixty years ago. Navigation locks were first built on the river in 1896, down at the Cascades. The first dam, at Rock Island, was built in 1932, a year before work began at Bonneville and Grand Coulee. To think of the Columbia only in terms of reservoirs, dams, towns, nuclear contamination, and fishlessness is to realize paradoxically how much history the making of hydroelectric dams has drowned. That history has grown inconsequential to British Columbians' and Canadians' sense of identity and to their understanding of how the Pacific Slope functioned *vis-à-vis* the rest of the continent.[10]

Just as BC Hydro did not take the time to log out the reservoir behind Mica Dam before filling it,[11] it conducted no extensive human history or archaeology of the bend, despite the fact that time for one was available, even if only as an unintended consequence of technicians' recommendations in mid-1960 that the building of the dam be deferred for four years (Swainson *Conflict* 163). The chief strategy for developing the dam and reservoir occurred in 1961, when Hamber Provincial Park, which had been established only two decades earlier (1941) over eighty per cent of the huge triangle of the Columbia watershed formed by the townsites of Golden, Revelstoke, and Valemount (Fig. 1), was hacked to its present size at the head of the Wood River valley and Fortress Lake (Fig. 1; "Resource" 6; Akrigg and Akrigg 103).[12] That re-designation took out of the park the portion of the fur trade route on the BC side of the continental divide, from Athabasca Pass down *Le Grand Côte* to Wood River and thence to the Columbia's Big Bend at Boat Encampment. When advising the BC government in 1973 on the possible options for the management of the resources of the region, K.G. Farquharson Engineering of West Vancouver identified no cultural heritage resources. Its report does take note of there being "several historic passes" between Valemount and Golden, and of a request from BC Parks Branch that a study reserve be established in the upper valleys of several rivers, including the Wood, but none of its recommendations for a "Recreation Policy" pertains to cultural heritage. Its principal focus is resource extraction: "Main development plans for the region include access for the forest industry, further hydro construction on the Columbia, construction of transmission lines and some recreation development" (Farquharson 7, 20, 10).[13] So it is indeed weird to find oneself wondering about a site of cultural history.[14] As basic a matter as Boat Encampment's exact historical location cannot be readily answered.

## III

Most visitors to Boat Encampment during the fur trade period contented themselves with locating it vaguely at the Big Bend, but the hydrography of the bend was not simple enough to render a vague location satisfactory. Occasionally, visitors who were inclined to make more particular notes would offer greater detail. Consider the Scot David Douglas's observation, made on 27 April 1827. The man after whom the Douglas Fir would be named specified the locale in the ways that interested a botanist most. Among the earlier accounts of the place, his ranks as a comparatively careful one:

> Arrived at the boat encampment 12 A.M. a low point in the angle between the two branches, the Columbia flowing from the east and Canoe from the north; the former sixty yards wide, the latter forty, but very rapid. At low water, as it is at present, the former has three channels, the latter two, which are not seen at high water, the space at that season being a perfect circle about six hundred yards in diameter. Around the camp on the point the woods are *Pinus taxifolia* [Douglas Fir: *Abies douglasii; Pseudotsuga menziesii*], *P. canadensis* [Western White Spruce], *Thuya occidentalis* [Northern White Cedar], *Populus, sp.* [Aspen], all of large growth. The underwood, *Cornus* [Dogwood], *Corylus* [Hazelwood], *Juniperus* [Juniper], and two species of *Salix* [Willow] not yet in flower. (Wilks and Hutchinson, eds. 253-54)

Douglas, who used both the adjective, "magnificent," and the noun, "horror," to describe the scenery at Boat Encampment, affords much specificity of the locale, extending to the composition of the forest.

Edward Ermatinger headed this brigade. The first publication of his journals, in 1912, included a coloured map, "Routes followed by Edward Ermatinger in 1827 and 1828." The red dot used to designate Boat Encampment is placed on the bank of the Columbia east of Canoe River; however, in an unfortunate repetition of Douglas's narrative silence, the map does not include Wood, or, as it was sometimes known, Portage, River (after 132).

Sketches, narrative accounts, and maps all furnish information, much of it contradictory, about the location of Boat Encampment during its period of active use. But I felt empty while sifting through various archives knowing that Boat Encampment is now drowned and that only simulacra of it in word and image remain. The emptiness struck hardest when an aerial photo of the Big Bend turned up (Fig. 2). Canoe River flows down the centre of this aerial view to join the Columbia, and, as the name handwritten over its battures (gravel flats) shows, Wood River flows from the east into the centre of the photo. The Columbia flows up from the lower edge at the right-centre of the photo, and then bends left and exits the photo's lower left-hand corner.

The watercourse that enters the Columbia's inside bank *after* this dramatic bend formed a large island.[15]

The location of Boat Encampment might well have altered during its forty-three years of semi-annual or more frequent use, in response to the steady erosion of the outer bank of the Columbia at this bend.[16] Leaping forward over the busy period of gold rush activity in the region during the 1860s, one finds BC provincial surveyor Frank Swannell reporting in 1936 that Boat Encampment lay "on the left bank of Wood River [when one faces down Wood River] at its junction with the Columbia, an historic spot":

> On some maps the name "Boat Encampment" is placed at the old ferry where the Big Bend Bridge now crosses, but there seems to be no doubt that the mouth of Wood River is the correct locality. There is a small brushy flat here and near by many very old moss-covered cedar-stumps; these crumble at the touch and may well be the remains of trees cut down from which boat-timber was split in the old fur-trade days. (Swannell o 35)[17]

As he suggests, Swannell took care to identify the site in part because maps up to his day had plotted it variously on the bend; indeed, in contrast to the general consensus of the written accounts, few maps agree on the location.[18] The same brushy flat was visible when, perhaps in the same decade, the surviving aerial photograph was taken.

Ninety years earlier, Pierre-Jean DeSmet, the widely travelled Jesuit missionary, arrived at Boat Encampment on 10 May 1846, while on his way west. This was a mere seven days after a brigade had left it travelling east. The two parties had met up on Athabasca Pass. The other group included Henry James Warre, an English lieutenant in the 14th Regiment, and Mervin Vavasour, an Upper Canadian lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. These men had travelled across the continent in 1845 with HBC brigades in the guise, as Governor Simpson put it, of private gentlemen travelling "for the pleasure of field sports and scientific pursuits" (qtd. in Schafer 35). In fact, they were appointed to reconnoitre the Oregon crisis and take stock of the challenges involved for Britain in defending the territory, if it should come to that (it didn't).

Despite the chronological proximity of their visits to Boat Encampment in May 1846, the location of the place differs on Warre's and DeSmet's sketch maps. Warre's sketch map of the portage takes up six pages of the only surviving book of field notes from this trip. On the left-hand edge of the first page of this map (Fig. 3), Warre clearly locates Boat Encampment on the east or upriver bank of Wood River (Warre Papers, vol. 18, [92]; NAC pagination, vol. 33, 1360).[19] This location aligns with that of his contemporary
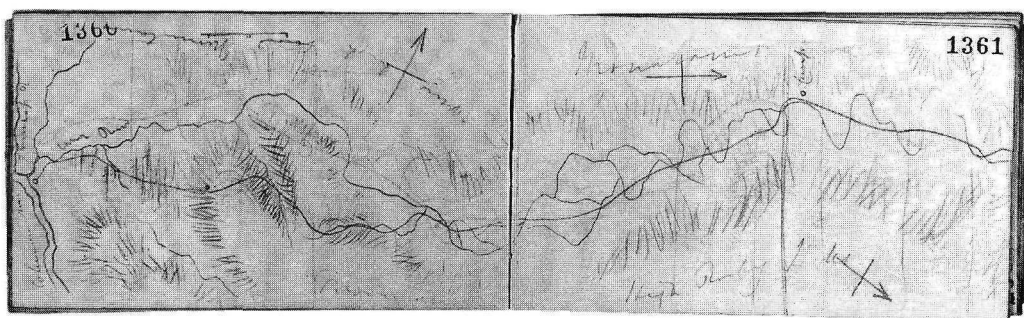
Fig. 3. Henry James Warre, Sketch Map of Athabasca Portage (detail), 1846. Courtesy NAC, neg. no. C146159.

Alexander Anderson; it is the location given as well in the topographical map produced in 1941 (British Columbia), and, as we have seen, it aligns with the location given in the careful account by Swannell. Because all of Warre, Anderson, and Swannell were amateur or professional surveyors, and because their plottings concur, they may be regarded as correct.

However, it is intriguing if not vexing to find that the location marked by Warre disagrees with the one marked on his own sketch map by Pierre-Jean DeSmet, the widely travelled Jesuit missionary. He arrived at Boat Encampment only seven days after Warre and Vavasour's departure from it, yet at the top edge of the relevant portion of his sketch map (Fig. 4) he locates Boat Encampment on the point between Wood and Canoe rivers. DeSmet uses a triangle and names it "campe$^t$ des berges," the river to the west of it bearing the name one expects: "R$^r$: aux Canots" (DeSmet).[20] By contrast, DeSmet's narrative account disputes the evidence of his own map and may, if only approximately, be construed as aligning the location of Boat Encampment with Warre's on the night of 2 May: "on the 10th, toward the middle of the day," DeSmet "arrived at the Boat Encampment, on the bank of the Columbia, at the mouth of the Portage river" (Chittenden and Richardson, 2.546).

DeSmet's narrative account is typical in its expression of a sense of relief that the arrival at Boat Encampment from the east occasioned:

> After so many labors and dangers, we deserved a repast. Happily, we found at the encampment all the ingredients that were necessary for a feast—a bag of flour, a large ham, part of a reindeer, butter, cheese, sugar, and tea in abundance, which the gentlemen of the English brigade had charitably left behind. While some were employed calking [sic] and refitting the barge, others prepared the dinner; and in about an hour we found ourselves snugly seated and stretched out
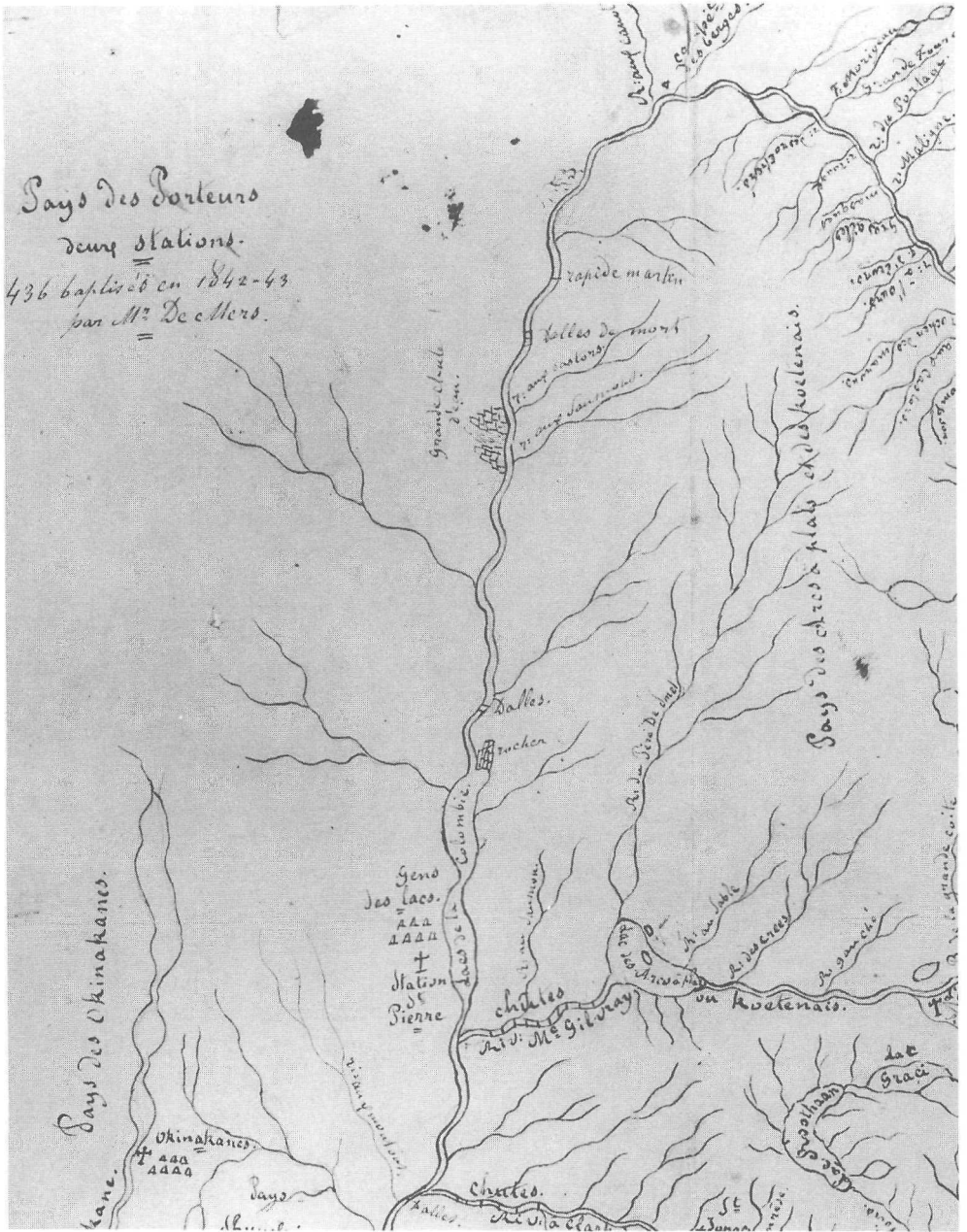
Fig. 4. Pierre-Jean DeSmet, "Pays des Porteurs"—Map of the Upper Columbia River (detail), circa 1851. Courtesy Washington State University Libraries, Pullman WA, neg. no. 99-145.

around the kettles and roasts, laughing and joking about the summersets on the mountains and the accidents on the Portage. I need not tell you that they described me as the most clumsy and awkward traveler in the band.

Three beautiful rivers unite at this place: the Columbia, coming from the southeast—the Portage river, from the northeast, and the Canoe river from the northwest. We were surrounded by a great number of magnificent mountains, covered with perpetual snow, and rising from twelve to sixteen thousand feet above the level of the ocean. (Chittenden and Richardson, 2.546)

Warre's field notes for 2 and 3 May do not convey the sense of occasion that DeSmet's journal captures—

reached the Boat Encampment, at the confluence of Three Rivers, surrounded by magnificent Snow Mountains 18.000 f! high. at 1 oC. P.M. The water fortunately very low. day lovely too hot for walking—This is a lovely spot in the Summer. Indian & Chiefs son brought us some Cariboo meat—made sketches & preparations for our long disagreable [sic] walk tomorrow—hauled up the boats & made all snug.—till the Autumn Express. (Warre Papers, vol. 18, [67-68]; NAC transcription, vol. 33, 1385-84)—

but they do demonstrate that Boat Encampment was a rendezvous, and that Lakes and Shuswap people visited it and provided hospitality to travellers who stopped there. Moreover, the sense of grandeur that the tri-valley confluence prompted in its visitors is clear from Warre's exaggerated estimate of the elevation of the mountains and from the mention that the scenery elicited sketches by him.

Some time later, perhaps once he reached Fort Edmonton, he set himself to the more literary genre of the retrospective journal. At that time, Warre found more ink for his imagination, highlighting more details of landscape and omitting the Natives:

I lack powers to describe "The Boat Encampment" we were in a perfect Amphitheatre of Mountains towering over each other & barely allowing space for the mighty Columbia to flow through, which here makes a right angular bend from the South & being joined by the [large blank space left] and Canoe River from the North flows off in a Westernly [sic] direction and its course is soon shut in by the Mountains.—At the junction of these Rivers is [sic] an immense Circular "Batture" is formed, wh altho dry at he present time, evidantly [sic] forms an immense Whirlpool at the Seasons of high water, after the melting of the Snow in the Mountains previous to the vast torrent gliding off & becoming lost in the Columbia.— (Warre Papers, vol. 19, 182-84; NAC transcription, vol. 33, 1623-25; rpt. in Major-Frégeau 120)

When it came to the sketches, Warre obviously was enthralled by the surroundings. He produced three. Aptly, if ironically, all three were published

as plans were afoot for the drowning of Boat Encampment; two appeared in 1970, and the third, together with a subsequent lithograph based on it, in 1976 (Hannah, introd., pl. 62, 63; Major-Frégeau, pl. 59, 60).[21]

In his study of Kane's art, Russell Harper included a colour reproduction of *Boat Encampment* (pl. XXIX), Kane's watercolour landscape sketch (Fig. 5).[22] According to the mid-twentieth-century provincial topographical survey, the principal mountains in the view are Mt Molson (52°10'00" N. Lat., 118°15'00" W. Long.), on the right and nearest the Big Bend; Mt Dainard (52°12'00" N. Lat., 118°22'00" W. Long.), just to the west (left) behind it and up the Canoe River valley; and a third mountain, with a distinctive triangle at its summit, farther yet up that valley. The last had no name in English until 1940, when the Alpine Club of Canada nominated it Mt Dunkirk (52°16'00" N. Lat., 118°25'00" W. Long.) (British Columbia).[23] Either none of these mountains was named during the fur trade, or none of the names by which they were then known has survived.

When he visited Boat Encampment in 1946, Corday Mackay was prompted to suggest that Kane made his watercolour sketch "near the island . . . just
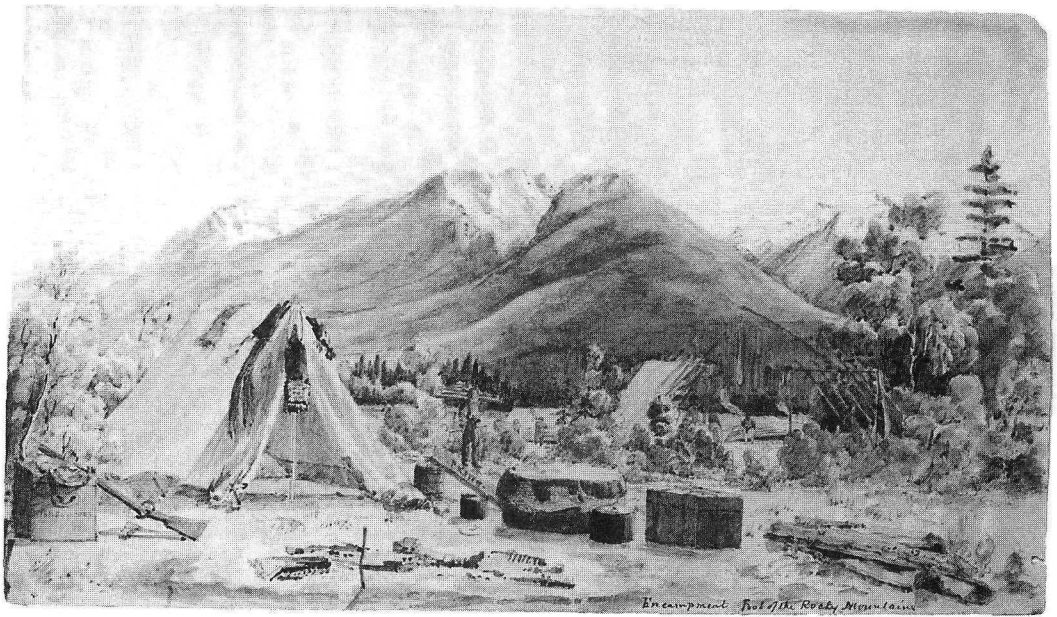


Fig. 5.  Paul Kane, *Boat Encampment*, 1847. Watercolour over graphite on paper. 13.3 x 22.2 cm. Courtesy Stark Museum of Art, Orange, TX.

below the widest part of the river" (20). Narrative accounts, by clearly situating Boat Encampment at one or another place on the outside bend of the Columbia, offer evidence to suggest that if he did cross the Columbia to sketch, the camp in Kane's watercolour sketch was not Boat Encampment itself, but a storage area. A detail in HBC Governor George Simpson's journal for 1825—"Put the Boats en Casche [sic] on the Island"—and in Ermatinger's for 1827—"Cross over the property to be left and put it en cache"—confirm that the island was at least occasionally and perhaps frequently used as a storage area, if not as an overflow camp (Merk 143; Ermatinger, introd. 79). Given that some eastbound brigades waited several weeks at Boat Encampment to rendezvous with the westbound brigade, it would seem logical that the encampment occasionally or even regularly spread out from the mouth of Wood River in all directions that offered firm ground. Kane might have grown weary of the company in the main camp, or he might simply have preferred the vantage point that the inside bend offered of the scenery. Unlike Warre, who spent less than twenty-four hours at the place and whose pictorial eye was still being drawn as much to the river up which he had been travelling for some months as to the mountains, Kane, who arrived on 10 October 1847 and did not depart until the last day of the month, had time to seek out the most picturesque view, and obviously had less interest in the river by the time he executed his sketch (Kane 336-38). Viewing it, one must look hard to detect the Columbia, flowing by the base of Mt Molson, just barely represented through the trees and in behind the tent, lean-tos, and two overturned boats, in front of each of which stands a voyageur smoking.

But the outline of the mountains in that sketch, let alone in the exaggerated oil-on-canvas paintings based on it,[24] bear only a slight resemblance to the one in a graphite sketch by him of the peaks. Harper compared this sketch with a photograph made at Boat Encampment in 1946 by Estelle Dickey, of Revelstoke. Reproduced together in his book, these resemble one another far more than either resembles the mountain peaks in the background of Kane's watercolour.[25] Of course, one must allow for the possibility that, in *Boat Encampment*, Kane arranged the scenery to conform to his aesthetic taste; he was generally a representative painter of landscape, but, as was the case with his watercolour sketch of Fort Edmonton, he was not averse to adopting a perspective that the ground itself did not afford.[26] The point of view he did adopt, whether realistic or fanciful, lies drowned beneath our knowing today. Still, a photograph of the reservoir looking north

Fig. 6. Kinbasket Lake, looking northwest, 23 April 1999. Author.

from the inside bend, where a logging road continues after Hwy 23 stops at Mica Dam (Fig. 6), is not unavailing. Shot in April 1999, when the reservoir was close to maximum drawdown, it goes some way toward recuperating at least the background of Kane's sketch. In this photograph, Mt Molson and Mt Dainard appear almost like a single mountain, just to the right of centre, with Mt Dunkirk to the left of centre. Comparison of the view with Kane's helps throw into relief just how much of the lower portions of the mountains is now submerged.

## IV

Had it survived, Boat Encampment would be coming up to within a decade of two hundred years of age. The present historical monument to it was reerected in the summer of 1999 after being repeatedly knocked down by machinery clearing snow off the logging road. It now stands across Sprague Bay from the BC Hydro boat launch, on the inside bend of the reservoir about seven kilometres up the logging road, where a peninsula juts out that nearly forms an island when the reservoir is full. Overlooking the reservoir, the monument can be reached by a trail about 200 metres long. At it, BC Forestry is planning to establish a recreation site (camping and picnicking). Presumably because it is thought unrealistic to do so, effort has not been expended to

clarify the relation between the location of the monument and the sub-
merged location of the place out in the reservoir to which its text directs
readers.

Driving back down Hwy 23, I pondered Hoover's principle of maximum
utilization. Did Kinbasket Lake and Mica Dam merely embody it differently
from Boat Encampment? Was it mere nostalgia for a drowned past that left
me feeling bereft amid all this technological wizardry? But the fur trade
brigades were not alienated from their surroundings. To the extent that they
possessed technology in the form of York boats, modelled after boats first
built in Orkney, whence many fur trade labourers came, they put that tech-
nology to use in order to make their way through a realm that dictated its
own terms for passage.

I had no terms on which to strike a bond with this valley. I was consum-
mately alienated. Yet, simultaneously and with withering irony, I was the
beneficiary of it as a consumer of electricity. There had been human history.
There had been natural history. But all I have left is technology, which pre-
cludes the history of the marriage between the human and the non-human.
It precludes my salvaging Boat Encampment. Or of finding salvation in a per-
ilous reservoir, attended by dire adjurations. What health can there be in me?

Frisell's lachrymose guitar offered consolation for the return trip from
this dead end, but only until it struck me that, living as he does in Seattle,
his guitar is probably electrified by the very power that Mica and its fellow
Columbia River dams generate. I wish he would write another elegy and
name it "gone, just like Boat Encampment." I don't want him to end up in
the same bin of irony where one finds Woody Guthrie's Columbian lyrics.
In 1941, that legendary poet wrote twenty-six songs while in the employ of
the USAmerican Bureau of Reclamation. Today, one of them resonates with
irony, the apt mode for alienation from one's surroundings: "Canadian
Northwest to the ocean so blue / Roll on Columbia, Roll On."[27]

With the loss of cultural history, we have no choice but to learn from
technological history. Will its deep ironies prompt us to realize that the first
lesson it has to teach is repentance?

(Manuscripts Division, NAC), Margaret McKirdey, David Mattison (BCARS), Janet Mason (BC Geographical Names), Jack Nisbet, Gil Scott (BC Parks), Tom Peterson, Alice ten Cate (BCARS), and Bruce Ward (Historical Map Society of British Columbia).

2 This droll translation of the motto is the effort of Harry Graham, captain in the Coldstream Guards, who served as aide-de-camp to the governor general of Canada, the Earl of Minto, during his trip to British Columbia and the Klondike in 1900 (see Bowles 45).

3 The Columbia River Treaty was signed by Canada and the United States on 17 Jan. 1961 and, after a protocol resolved a disagreement between Ottawa and Victoria over British Columbia's decision to sell the first three decades of power to the United States, it came into effect on 16 September 1964 (Swainson, *Conflict* xviii, xix). Thereafter, three dams—Duncan (1967), on Duncan River, north of Kootenay Lake; Hugh Keenleyside (1968), on the Columbia, eight km upriver of Castlegar; and Mica (1973), on the Columbia, 150 km upriver of Revelstoke and 180 km downriver of Golden—were completed in its water-shed north of the international border. Of these three, the first two were constructed entirely to form reservoirs to prevent downstream flooding and to reserve water for USAmerican use downstream when the demand for electricity was highest. Only Mica Dam, construction of which began in 1963, added a powerhouse; it began generating electricity in 1977 (a decade after the Bennett Dam on the Peace River). Under the origi-nal terms of the treaty, British Columbia received half of the quantity of electricity gen-erated in the United States as a result of the provision of fifteen and one-half million acre-feet (19,111 million $m^3$) of storage capacity north of the border. (In fact, Mica was built to form a much larger reservoir than required: the maximum storage capacity at the three treaty dams—Duncan [1,727 million $m^3$], Keenleyside [8,757.85 million $m^3$], and Mica [14,800 million $m^3$]—totals 25,284.85 million $m^3$, almost 6,200 million $m^3$ or 32 per cent greater capacity than the treaty required [BC Hydro]). The value of that half-portion of the power benefit for the first thirty years was settled as a lump sum payment of almost $254.4 million (Swainson, "Columbia"). The return of downstream benefits began accruing to British Columbia in 1998, after the first thirty years of this agreement (1998 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of Duncan Dam). The benefits deriving from Mica Dam will thus begin returning to British Columbia in 2003. The Columbia Peace Treaty of 1996 resolved that the return of the benefits to the province would come in the form of electricity (Swainson, "Columbia").

In 1984, Revelstoke Dam (Fig. 1) was built on the Columbia eight km upriver from the town of Revelstoke; it too generates electricity but was not built as part of the Columbia River Treaty. Other dams generating hydroelectricity in the Columbia watershed north of the international border include Aberfeldie (1922/1955) and Elko (1924), both south-east of Cranbrook on the Bull and Elk rivers, respectively; Kootenay Canal (1976), which operates on the Kootenay River at Rover Creek (South Slocan) in conjunction with West Kootenay Power's Corra Linn, Upper and Lower Bonnington, and South Slocan dams; Seven Mile, on the Pend d'Oreille River; Spillimacheen (1955), on the river of the same name, fifty-five km upriver from Golden; Walter Hardman (1960s), thirty km south of Revelstoke on Cranberry Creek; and Whatshan (1951/1972), on Whatsan River, which flows from the west into Arrow Reservoir, Columbia River (BC Hydro). According to at least one observer, these projects have resulted in "the greatest myth that has ever been perpetrated on the people of British Columbia . . . that there is cheap power in the province" (McGeer 62).

4 See *Learning from the Past.*

5 This is one of those Rocky Mountain parks that UNESCO has designated a World Heritage Site. More problematic for the balance between tourism and non-human life, it is also one of the parks that the October 1999 issue of *National Geographic Traveler* magazine listed as one of the world's ten must-see "Wild Country" sites.

6 See also Nisbet, *Sources* 177.

7 Tiny Fort Assiniboine and Jasper House (Fig. 1), both on the Athabasca River, marked the only points on the fur trade route between Boat Encampment and Fort Edmonton; downstream on the Columbia, no regular stopping place was maintained between Boat Encampment and Fort Covile.

8 See MacLaren, "Cultured."

9 At its maximum capacity, Kinbasket Lake (known until 1980 as McNaughton Lake) has a surface area of 450 km² (172 mi²) (Farquharson).

10 In designating a provincial system of rivers "that represents the diversity of character, history and location of [the] provincial river heritage," the BC Heritage Rivers Board nominated the Columbia River as a Heritage River in a report prepared on 22 Sept. 1997 for the BC Minister of Environment, Lands, and Parks. Although the board reported that the Columbia "ranks high in all the heritage river criteria categories," it overlooked the role played by the Columbia in the fur trade, focussing instead on the river's demonstration of "major examples of the cultural heritage values of the province including those of First Nations, hydro power development, settlement, mining and forestry" (BC Heritage Rivers). The BC government bestowed Hertiage River designation on the Columbia River in 1998.

11 Approximately "70,000 acres of highly productive forest lands" comprised some of the "extremely heavy" environmental losses sustained by the establishment of Mica Dam and Kinbasket Lake ("Resource" 4). A man interviewed in Golden by Robin Cody, who paddled the length of the Columbia River in 1990, regretted the transformation of a beautiful valley: "'Millions of board feet of spruce. [BC Hydro] didn't want our log trucks interfering with their earth movers. They cut it and left it. D-8s pushed it into piles. Water came up and the wind blew it to hell and gone. Slash and all'" (Cody 59). Consequently, Kinbasket Lake became anything but the recreational attraction that planners of the reservoir foresaw. "Nobody knows," wrote Cody, "what the consequences of Kinbasket Lake will be" (65). Meanwhile, the warning to boaters posted on Hwy 23 at Mica Dam hardly encourages recreation:

> If you intend to operate a boat or canoe on Kinbasket Lake you should be aware that Kinbasket Lake is subject to sudden strong winds and rough waves. These dangerous boating conditions are made worse by cold water, substantial accumulations of floating and submerged debris and the remote location. Be cautious! Stay close to shore. Carry emergency equipment extra [sic] sheer pins and propeller. Landing sites are limited and may be inaccessible. Ensure that you have an accurate map. In winter ice surface may collapse due to lowered water levels. For your own safety please observe all warning signs and stay off B.C. Hydro operating structures.

12 At 9,841 km² (3,800 mi²), the original Hamber Provincial Park approached the size of Jasper National Park, which covers 10,880 km² (4,201 mi²). Since 1961, Hamber Provincial Park has comprised only 246 km² (ninety-five mi²).

13 The report by Farquharson, which remarked on a "present planning void" (12) for the region, also observed with a certain equanimity that

> the reservoir will have a great impact on wildlife with severe habitat reductions involving 4,000 acres of wet lands, 900 acres of meadows and 70,000 acres of forest.

Capacity will be reduced by about 2,000 moose, 3,000 black bear and a total loss of riverine and wet land animals. There is little opportunity for habitat replacement in the Mica region. . . . Total annual value of potential wildlife resources after flooding is estimated at $420,000, about 50% of the original value. The fluctuations of reservoir level will preclude successful nesting habitat for waterfowl. (7-8)

Apart from a "water influence zone" which is drawn as a band around the reservoir, and a "slide protection zone" of a similar narrow band's width immediately around the site of Mica Dam itself, the entire Big Bend is shown as "Commercial Forest Zone" in the report's "Mica Reservoir Study. Land Management Proposal, North Sheet" (Fig. 3, sheet 2 of 2). Four years after the completion of the Farquharson report, the periodical *Park News* warned that the "spectre of an environmental ruin is rising in the Big Bend" ("Resource" 6).

14   The era of the fur trade represents the principal concern of this essay, but, of course, other dimensions of human history disappeared. Three are particularly notable. The loss of the oldest human history resulting from flooding created by a dam in the Columbia River watershed occurred in 1969. In that year, the creation of the reservoir behind Lower Monumental Dam, on the Snake River sixty km upriver of its confluence with the Columbia, flooded the site of Marmes Man. Blaine Harden quoted one authority as saying that, before one-quarter of it could be properly excavated by archaeologists, "'the only site in eastern Washington where . . . ten thousand years of cultural history [are] stacked one above the other'" disappeared (49). Second, when in 1993 he met Martin Louie, Sr. on the Coville Reservation, near the site of the submerged Kettle Falls, Harden realized that any white man would be perceived by a Colville as having "had a hand in making a world where Colvilles had no salmon, drank to excess, and blew their brains out" (101). Third, in terms of resettlement of whites occasioned by Columbia River hydro projects in British Columbia, J.W. Wilson notes that prior to 1961 "more than thirty small settlements adorned the shores of the [Arrow] lakes," south of Revelstoke and north of Castlegar (8, 6).

15   This is confirmed by a large-scale map published in 1954 from surveys made in 1950 and 1951 (Canada . . . Mines). Given the large scale of this map, one can best locate the site of Boat Encampment as approximately 52°08'00" N. Lat., 118°26'30" W. Long. The scale of the map is estimable but the plotting on it of Boat Encampment is misleading: Boat Encampment and Boat Encampment Memorial are unhistorically located at the bridge upriver from the Big Bend, where the highway crossed the Columbia River when the map was made.

16   In 1946, one visitor wrote of the "magnificent orchestration of sound" made by the water's power (Mackay 17). A peninsula on the alluvial fan between the mouths of the Wood and Canoe rivers had disappeared by that year. Then, as well, when the rationing of gasoline for the Second World War came to an end, and not much more than a quarter-century before its roadbed would disappear under the waters rising behind Mica Dam, vehicles began using the Big Bend Highway regularly for the first time (Mackay 14, 20). The highway had been completed in 1940.

In October 1824, George Simpson noted that the mouth of Canoe River lay "about a mile" below Boat Encampment (Merk 37). When Alexander Ross stopped there with Simpson the next spring, he located Boat Encampment at the mouth of Portage (Wood) River, but on which bank he did not say (Ross 2.187-88). A year later, on 15 Oct. 1826, hydrographer Æmilius Simpson reached Boat Encampment by horse from Athabasca Pass and Wood River; he found it "situated on the left Bank of the branch we followed on

our Route" (37v). This appears to be where Douglas found it six months later, in April 1827—on the east bank of Wood River at its mouth. *Vis-à-vis* the Columbia, this is the *upriver* bank of the mouth of Wood River. The weight of the narrative evidence suggests that it was still there two decades later, when Paul Kane arrived at it.

17 One of the maps available to Swannell in 1936 to which he may be referring in this statement regarding the locating of Boat Encampment at the ferry was that of Palmer and Chapman. As remarked above (n15), at least one later map (Canada . . . Mines) repeated this error.

18 Of the few nineteenth-century maps that clearly indicate a location, several are noteworthy for the contradictory information they yield. Thompson, in the map which he delivered to William McGillivray of the North West Company in 1814, wrote "NWCo" up the east bank of Canoe River at its mouth, but, because the mouths of it and the Wood River are made to converge, no point is shown between the two at the Columbia's outer bend; thus, it is not clear if Thompson meant that the point was the site (Thompson). In 1835, HBC factor Samuel Black plotted the site on his sketch map as the west bank of Wood River at its mouth (Black). A map drawn in 1861 to accompany a despatch by then governor of British Columbia, James Douglas, located Boat Encampment on the point between Canoe and Wood rivers (*British*), and, when a lithographed version was produced the next year by Gustavus Epner, the point was widened and the circle designating Boat Encampment moved left, to the east bank of Canoe River at its mouth (Epner). Alexander C. Anderson made two maps. One, which bears the date of 1842 in its subtitle, but also the date of 1 February 1866 beside a notation that reads "recopied from the fragments of my old maps," set it on the east bank of the Wood (his "Punchbowl") River but slightly upstream from the Columbia. In his map of 1867, which Anderson states he produced from surveys he made between 1832 and 1851, the location is unchanged (Anderson). In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Gotfred Jörgensen kept it on the outer bank of the Columbia, but placed it to the west of (that is, downstream from) the mouth of Canoe River, nearer to what had by then been named Encampment Creek (Jörgensen). Between 1846 and 1863, six maps produced by John Arrowsmith located Boat Encampment between the mouths of the Wood and Canoe rivers. The location on Jörgensen's map also appeared on the map made by the interprovincial boundary survey a quarter-century later (see *Atlas*).

19 On Warre's map, the names Wood and Canoe are given as Canoe and Shuswap, respectively; however, the configuration of the streams *vis-à-vis* the Columbia leaves no doubt about his meaning. There are many volumes of journals from Warre's trip but, as distinct from this volume of field notes (vol. 18), the others contain journals, that is, a second-stage narrative comprising retrospective, fair copies of field notes, not entered daily but, rather, written up at different points in his travels when he and Vavasour were staying at one or another HBC post. For an anatomy of the literature of exploration and travel, see MacLaren, "Samuel" and "Exploration."

20 DeSmet misspells "barges," and "Canots" lacks the *accent circonflexe*. A reproduction of this map inadvertently cuts off some of the letters in the French name of Boat Encampment (Goetzmann xiv).

21 The lithograph, under the title *The Rocky Mountains from the Columbia River, looking North West*, was published first in 1848 (Warre pl. 16).

22 This sketch, in the possession of the Stark Museum of Art (Stark WWC100), is listed as IV-276 in Harper's *catalogue raisonné* (292).

23 Only the western shoulder of Mt Molson is visible in the aerial photograph (Fig. 2), while both Mt Dainard and Mt Dunkirk stand out boldly. For the naming of Mt Dunkirk, on 13 Aug. 1940, see Hall. The sketch map accompanying his article (214) does not show or name Mt Molson or Mt Dainard. Hall explains that his climbing party chose Dunkirk for the mountain's name "in honor of the miraculous escape of most of the British forces in France only a few weeks before" (215).

24 In his *catalogue raisonné* (292) Harper lists these as IV-278 (Royal Ontario Museum 912.1.60) and IV-279 (Glenbow-Alberta Museum 57.32.5).

25 Harper's *catalogue raisonné* (292) lists the graphite sketch of the mountain peaks, held by the Royal Ontario Museum (946.15.236) as IV-277. It features Mt Dainard in the middle and only the slightest shoulder of Mt Molson on the right. It is reproduced in Harper together with Dickey's photograph as Fig. 117 and Fig. 118 (220). An earlier photograph than Dickey's shows the same peak—Mt Dainard—that appears in the middle of the background of hers. Reproduced with the title "Looking North at the Ferry," it suggests that, at least in mid-August 1921, the river was crossed regularly at the point where the island was situated (Lorraine 160).

26 The watercolour sketch of Edmonton, in the collection of the Stark Museum of Art (PWC22), is also reproduced in colour in Harper, pl. XXV. It is listed in his *catalogue raisonné* as IV-188 (288).

27 The complete lyrics of "Roll on Columbia, Roll On," the best-known of these songs, are reprinted in Harden (82).

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