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15 December 2007

Ms Diane Lamoureux
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Diane M. Lamoureux,

Although we did not correspond directly, I know that earlier in the year you were kind enough to provide Peter Murphy with some material concerning the visit of Viscount Milton to Father Lacombe's mission at St Albert in 1863, when he enquired on my behalf. I am indeed grateful to you for your help, and in particular for a pertinent passage from the Chronicles of the Grey Nuns.

I have recently completed my commentary on the expedition across British North America made by Lord Milton and his companion, Dr Cheadle, and in case it might be of interest to you, I enclose a copy. Please note that it is intended only for private circulation, since publication would require exploration of the copyrights of some of the illustrations, but I am content for it to be read by anyone who is sufficiently interested.

In the latter regard, I understand that in the course of dealing with Peter's enquiry you consulted François Nadeau in Montreal. I should be glad also to send him a copy of my paper, in appreciation of his help, if you would care to let me have his address.

Thank you again for the trouble you took on my behalf.

*Yours sincerely,
Brian W Long*

Brian W Long

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

1911-1912

Library of The University of Chicago
1155 East 58th Street
Chicago, Ill. 60637

I have recently completed my research on the history of the University of Chicago Library. I have found that the library has a long and distinguished history, and I am pleased to have been able to contribute to its history.

I have also found that the library has a very important role to play in the future of the University of Chicago. I am confident that the library will continue to be a center of excellence in the field of library studies.

In the future, I hope to continue my research on the history of the University of Chicago Library. I am confident that my research will be of great value to the library and to the University of Chicago.

Thank you again for the trouble you took in my behalf.

Very truly yours,
John W. ...

A Mari usque ad Mare

A commentary on the expedition across British North America
from the Atlantic to the Pacific undertaken
by Viscount Milton and Dr W B Cheadle in 1862 and 1863,
abridged from their book, *The North West Passage by Land* and
Dr Cheadle's *Journal of a Trip across Canada 1862-1863*, and
supplemented by material from other sources.

B W Long



OUR PARTY ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS.
(From a Photograph.)

(Frontispiece)

The frontispiece to *The North-west Passage by Land*, showing Milton and Cheadle with the family of Louis Battenotte (known as 'the Assiniboine') who accompanied them across the Rocky Mountains. Left to right: The Assiniboine's 13-year-old son, Milton, Cheadle, the Assiniboine and his wife.

Nothing could induce me to spend the remainder of my life in a country where so much hardship and privation had to be endured, beyond the bounds of civilisation.

(Edward Ermatinger, leader of the Hudson's Bay Company 'Columbia Express' brigade at the end of his term of employment in 1828.)

Lord Milton is something better than a Lord; he has proved himself to be a fine, heroic young man, of true English pluck and daring. He has lately crossed the Rocky Mountains to discover whether a north-western passage by land from the Atlantic to the Pacific be not possible that way; in his journey he had to confront difficulties and brave dangers which might well have appalled a much older and more experienced traveller. Lord Milton is, then, no listless, shiftless Lord Dundreary, neither is he a mere pleasure-hunter, but a genuine Englishman – a splinter off the old Hartz rock – brave, tough, wise, energetic, and shifty in expedients.

(Illustrated Times 1865)

A mari usque ad mare



In the Beginning

The title of this paper – from sea to sea – is the motto¹ on the Canadian grant of arms. It has been chosen here to reflect both the vastness of the rich land stretching between the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Oceans which is the backdrop to this story, and the enormity of the task of exploring it by two inexperienced young men in the mid-19th century.

The journey began on 19 June 1862 when the steamer *Anglo-Saxon* weighed anchor at Liverpool, bound for Quebec. Among its passengers were William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam (who, as the Viscount Milton, was heir to the sixth Earl Fitzwilliam) and his personal physician, Dr Walter Cheadle.

Milton and Cheadle resolved to travel from east to west across British North America, by way of the second most northerly pass through the Rocky Mountains, known as the Leather - or Yellowhead - Pass.



Wentworth Woodhouse

The Fitzwilliam family has an illustrious history. In 1502 Sir William Fitzwilliam, a merchant in the City of London, bought an estate of some 22,000 acres centred on Milton, about three miles from the cathedral city of Peterborough in eastern England. The family became prominent courtiers, and Elizabeth I appointed Sir William's grandson Keeper of Fotheringhay

Castle at the time when Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned, and later executed, there in 1587. In due course the title was advanced to a barony and, in the 18th century, to an earldom. In 1746 the third earl married the sister of the Marquess of Rockingham, who had large estates in Yorkshire and a family seat at Wentworth Woodhouse near Rotherham; the marquess died without an heir, and in consequence his estates descended through his sister to Earl Fitzwilliam. During the early 19th century the family lived mainly at Wentworth, and Viscount Milton was brought up there.

This Great Land

If the name Canada meant anything to an Englishman in the 1860s, it meant those parts of today's provinces of Ontario and Quebec lying close to the St Lawrence, together with the maritime colonies.



The Canadian colonies
at the time of Confederation

British Columbia on the far side of the continent was certainly not part of it, whilst the vast lands in between, together with most of Labrador, were the fiefdom of "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading (sic) into Hudson's Bay".² It had been so since 1670 when Charles II made his cousin, Prince Rupert, and his fellow Adventurers the "Lords and Proprietors" of all the land that drained into Hudson's Bay. Whilst almost all of this lay within British North America, the definition would also have included the parts of North Dakota and Minnesota drained by the northward flowing Red River, had the charter not restricted the grant to those lands "...which are not now actually possessed by any of our Subjectes or by the Subjectes of any other Christian Prince or State."

Even in the mid-19th century this great territory was still known as Rupert's Land and not only did the Hudson's Bay Company own it, but - to the extent that it could exert its will - it governed it.

Within British territory, the land west of the Great Lakes was known only to native tribes, trappers, fur traders, and a few missionaries. Across the

prairies, trails connected the trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, but passage through the Rockies meant cutting one's way through thick forests and crossing fast-flowing rivers.



The lands (within the red line) owned and controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company

The British Government was beginning to realise that it knew very little about British North America, and less still about its potential. In 1857 the Colonial Office engaged Captain John Palliser to lead the North British America Exploring Expedition which, during the following three years, made a comprehensive survey of the land between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains. But Palliser worked within about 200 miles of the United States frontier with the consequence that, although he surveyed the southern passes through the Rockies, he did not explore the northerly Leather Pass, by which Milton and Cheadle now intended to make their crossing.

The Travellers



Viscount Milton



Dr Cheadle

By any standard, Milton and Cheadle faced a monumental challenge. They were not experienced explorers: Cheadle was 27 and Milton 23; few white men had crossed the Rockies by their intended route; 2,000 miles of their journey lay through virtual wilderness, and they would have to winter on the prairies, fending for themselves in temperatures of 40° below zero. And to add to these risks, Lord Milton suffered from epilepsy.

About ten years earlier, when Milton was no more than a child, he and his younger brother were sent to spend the summer at Coollattin, the family estate in Ireland; the earl's agent took it upon himself to put the boys safely on the ferry at Liverpool; having done so, he wrote to their father, assuring him that they had been safely put aboard, only to be rebuked for failing to allow the boys the independence to find their own way onto the boat.³ Evidently, the earl expected his sons – and especially his heir – to stand on their own feet.



William Thomas Spencer Wentworth Fitzwilliam KG
(1815 – 1902)

Milton was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge but during his youth he spent long periods in a variety of clinics, in the hope of curing his illness.⁴ Epilepsy was not well understood and, according to contemporary medical opinion, it was a manifestation of lunacy and likely to be hereditary. Perhaps it was not surprising, therefore, that the 6th Earl considered it advisable that his son should not marry.

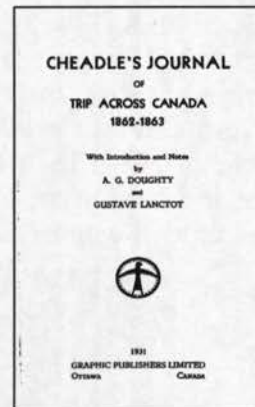
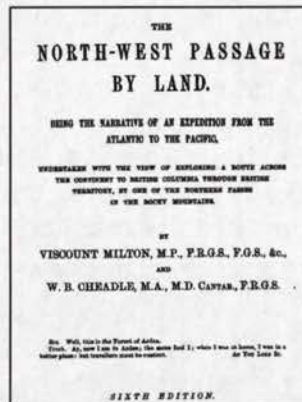
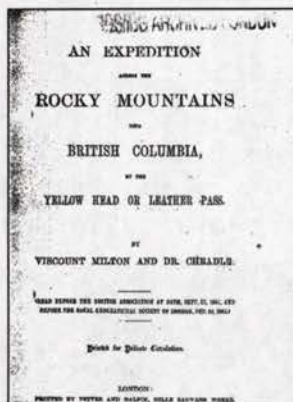
When, in 1861, Milton became engaged to Dorcas, the daughter of Lord Chichester, his father endeavoured to explain to Lord Chichester enough about Milton's medical condition to induce him to get his daughter to call off the engagement.⁵ At about the same time, Milton also wrote to Lord Chichester claiming that he had been misled into believing that Miss Chichester was of age, whereas she was not, and seeking to set the engagement aside as a consequence.⁶ There is no evidence that Milton used this somewhat flimsy excuse at his father's behest, but whether he did or not, he seems to have been extricated from the engagement.

Early in 1862 there was an another embarrassing - and rather mysterious - episode; on this occasion Milton was accused, but acquitted, of fraud in relation to some earrings belonging to another lady.

It was against this background that the earl seems to have decided that fresh preoccupations should be forced upon his son, and that the adoption of such a course might also be good for Milton's health and for the development of his character.

Yet, although he was evidently unhappy about being packed off to Canada⁷ Milton seems to have had a certain enthusiasm about this ambitious – even foolhardy – undertaking. A short visit he had made to British North America two years earlier might have stimulated his interest in the natural resources and the potential of this great land. Be that as it may, in the paper which they delivered to the Royal Geographical Society on their return, Milton and Cheadle give two key reasons for the expedition: the discovery, in 1858, of gold in British Columbia and the importance of connecting the British North American colonies in the east with the Pacific coast.⁸

Cheadle had also been at Trinity College, but had since qualified in medicine and it is not clear whether he had first become acquainted with Milton at Cambridge. In any case, it must be probable that Lord Fitzwilliam had the last word in choosing his son's personal physician. In the event, Cheadle's qualities of leadership proved to be at least as important as his professional competence. He became the driving force on the road and was often frustrated when Milton's reluctance to get up in the mornings caused them to lose valuable time.



The expedition is also documented in a book entitled *The North-west Passage by Land* written jointly (though mainly by Cheadle) and published in 1865, and in *Cheadle's Journal of a Trip across Canada 1862-1863* published posthumously in 1931. Their book was popular on both sides of the Atlantic, and became required reading for anyone seeking a fortune in what was then the wild west of British North America.

Arguably, the title chosen for their book exaggerated the significance of the expedition, for a land route across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific coast had first been discovered by Sir Alexander Mackenzie. In 1793 he made an epic journey from Lake Athabasca, 400 miles north-east of Edmonton, westward through the valley of the Peace River that flows from west to east through the Rockies, then south to the Fraser River and finally by traverse of the Coast Mountains to the Indian settlement of Bella Coola at the head of the fjord-like Burke Channel.⁹ Thus, Milton and Cheadle were not 'discoverers' in the same sense as Mackenzie was. On the other hand, the validity of their chosen route lay in the fact that, unlike Mackenzie's, it had

commercial potential. Moreover although, as we shall see, the passage through the Rockies had been prospected by others, Milton and Cheadle were the first Europeans to cross the Yellowhead Pass with the object of establishing it as a viable route to the Pacific coast.¹⁰

The Tourist Trail

The *Anglo Saxon* reached Quebec on 2 July, nearly two weeks after leaving Liverpool. Cheadle equipped himself with a sextant, and he and Milton took the train to the town of Cornwall, at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, whence they sailed to Toronto. Before continuing their expedition, they visited Niagara Falls, a half-day's journey by steamer and train. Their first impressions were disappointing, for Cheadle writes: "Hearing so much from earliest childhood of the great Falls of Niagara, one forms a most exaggerated conception of their magnitude and grandeur. But," he admits, "the scene rapidly began to exercise a charm over us, and as we stood on the edge of the Horseshoe Fall, on the very brink of the precipice over which the vast flood hurls itself, we confessed the sublimity of the spectacle."¹¹

The terrain beyond Toronto to the north of the Great Lakes is a network of rivers and thousands of small lakes, swamp and forest. Indians and Company *voyageurs*¹² traversed it by canoe, interrupted by numerous portages. But neither road nor railway had penetrated the thousand miles of wilderness between Toronto and Fort Garry - the Hudson's Bay Company post from which the city of Winnipeg eventually grew.

The United States, on the other hand, offered a more practical route, and Milton and Cheadle travelled onward from Toronto by train, through Detroit and Chicago, to the town of La Crosse on the Mississippi. From there a steamer took them to St Paul, Minnesota, and by a combination of train, mail coach and wagon they eventually reached Georgetown on the Red River.



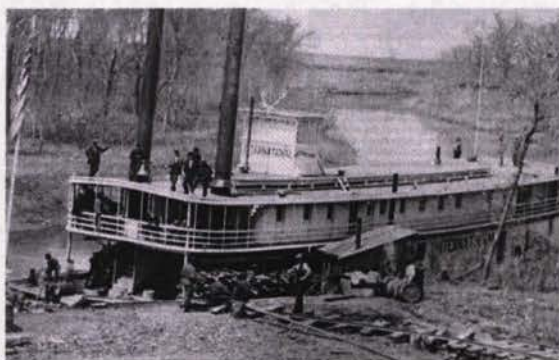
The serpentine course of the Red River

Fort Garry lay 200 miles due north of Georgetown along the river, but its serpentine twists and turns meant a voyage of nearer 500. They planned to

embark on the steamer that plied between Georgetown and Fort Garry, but the river was low which, it was feared, would probably prevent the boat from arriving for some weeks.

Into the Wilderness

Being unwilling to wait on events, Milton and Cheadle bought two birch-bark canoes, loaded them with their belongings and began paddling to Fort Garry. The canoes had seen better days; one of them was riddled with bullet holes, and both needed constant repair. During the next two weeks on the river they endured mosquitoes, boils, food poisoning, violent electric storms and torrential rain; finally, within 100 miles of Fort Garry (and as their canoes threatened to disintegrate) they were much relieved to be picked up by the stern-wheeler *International* which took them on to Fort Garry.



The Red River steamer *International*

The fort was close to the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. There is not much left of it today but, while *The Canadian* transcontinental train makes its leisurely afternoon stop at the Winnipeg railway station, there is time for 21st century passengers to cross the road to inspect the surviving North Gate, which lies behind the Fort Garry Hotel.



Left: Fort Garry in the 1860s. Right: the North Gate beside the Fort Garry Hotel today

The Historical Context

It was at Fort Garry that the history of British North America began to impress itself upon Milton and Cheadle. Leaving aside the early Norsemen,

who were more interested in fish than exploration, the north-east coast was discovered in 1497 by John Cabot¹³ acting on behalf of Henry VII. But it was Samuel de Champlain who, in opposition to British claims, began to colonise the St Lawrence basin for France in the early 17th century.

The colony of New France, centred on Quebec, grew steadily and the British made several unsuccessful attempts to gain control. But by the mid-18th century France was pre-occupied with events in Europe and the British seized the initiative. On the night of 12 September 1759 General Wolfe took the Quebec garrison by surprise. Instead of attacking from the river, he took his troops up a defile to the west, out of sight of the citadel, and gained the height of the land, known as the Plains of Abraham. He was thus able to attack from a superior position and succeeded in routing the French. Both Wolfe and the French commander, Montcalm, died of wounds sustained during the battle, but it was a crucial achievement for the British. The rest of the French militia retreated to Montreal and surrendered there to a superior British force the following spring.



The Plains of Abraham at Quebec,
where General Wolfe routed the French

Having won the battle, Britain found herself in charge of 80,000 French with nowhere to go. They out-numbered British immigrants and so the French influence began to permeate Canada's development as far inland as the Great Lakes. Following American independence in 1776, the northward migration of 45,000 refugees from New England swung the balance of population back in favour of the British, but at the same time exacerbated old animosities. In an attempt to reconcile differences the large territory previously known as Quebec was divided into two provinces: Upper Canada (now Ontario) and French-speaking Lower Canada (now Quebec).

In 1862 each Canadian province was a separate colony. Ontario, Quebec and the other eastern provinces were each run from London through a provincial governor; similarly in the west, British Columbia and Vancouver's Island constituted two further colonies.

The Hudson's Bay Company¹⁴

The land between east and west had, since 1670, been the preserve of the Hudson's Bay Company. As we have seen, its charter gave its governors total control (under the British Crown) of all the land that drained into Hudson Bay – a vast, almost uninhabited area known as Rupert's Land stretching from the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains.

As it had always been, the Company's business was fur trading. It built trading posts throughout its empire, where it bartered knives, guns, ammunition, copper wire, tobacco, beads, blankets, clothing, pots and pans for pelts and hides. The animal skins were shipped back to England through York Factory on the shore of Hudson Bay at the end of each summer, just before the ice closed in. The Company drew its officer class predominantly from Scots emigrants, many of whose forebears had been displaced by the Highland clearances in the 18th century. The Company's "other ranks", on the other hand, tended to be filled by men of mixed European – usually French - and Indian blood.



*We Doe Grant
unto the said Governor and
Company and their successors the
sole Trade and Commerce of all
those Seas Straights Bayes Rivers
Lakes Creekes and Soundes that
lie within the entrance of
Hudsons Straights and
make create and constitute (them)
the true and absolute Lordes and
Proprietors of the same
Territory*

Extracts from the Hudson's Bay Company's charter, 1670

The Company had no interest in land settlement, which would have reduced still further the already over-trapped beaver population. Its fur trains travelled from post to post by established trails, but it much preferred the prairies to remain uncultivated. Settlement was nevertheless inevitable and two months before Milton and Cheadle's arrival, a group of 200 brave souls (later known as the Overlanders) had set out from Fort Garry intending to cross the Rocky Mountains and settle in British Columbia.

Preparations

Milton and Cheadle planned to follow the same route, but it was already August and too late to attempt a crossing of the Rockies before winter. Accordingly, they resolved to winter on the prairies.

But first they spent two weeks at Fort Garry fitting out their expedition. Here they engaged Louis La Ronde¹⁵, a French half-breed whom Milton knew from his previous visit, and who was to be their guide. La Ronde negotiated the purchase of horses, and the fort supplied the inventory, consisting of three hundredweight of flour, twenty pounds of tea, ten pounds of coffee, fourteen pounds of salt, three pounds of pepper, twenty pounds of tobacco, eight

gallons of rum, one blanket, one buffalo robe, knives, axes, copper wire for snares and ammunition. Mrs La Ronde also provided twelve pairs of moccasins, together with moose skin breeches and leggings.



Hudson's Bay Company stores were usually kept unheated to discourage trappers from congregating there

One further, indispensable item was bought from the fort: one hundredweight of pemmican. Pemmican was the staple food of the prairies, and frequently saved both Indians and Europeans from starvation. Its name was derived from a Cree word meaning grease.

The recipe was simple: take one buffalo and remove the hide; cut the meat into thin strips; hang on racks to dry in the sun; reduce to pulp by pounding; sew the hide into a large sack; half-fill with pulverised meat; add boiling fat; flavour with saskatoon berries and seal the sack with tallow.

A normal day's ration was 1½ pounds, which could be eaten raw or fried, or made into a soup known as rubaboo. Pemmican had an acquired taste and tested the inexperienced digestive system but was highly nutritious, easy to carry and never went bad.



Drying meat to make pemmican

And to transport all this, they bought several carts. Although neither the book nor Cheadle's *Journal* describes them, it is safe to assume that they were Red River Carts. This serviceable vehicle was designed in 1802 by

Alexander Henry and became the standard form of freight haulage on the prairies. It was constructed entirely of wood and held together with wooden pegs and buffalo hide. The total absence of iron avoided rust and facilitated the repair of any component from timber or hide available along the route. Additionally, since the cart had only two easily removable wheels, its body could readily be floated across rivers.

The Red River Cart was intended as Company transport for furs and supplies, with a design load was 500 pounds. The standard weight that a Company *voyageur* was expected to carry over a portage was 90 pounds, and the carts were thus designed accommodate five packs.



A Red River cart

The time at Fort Garry was spent pleasantly enough. Cheadle's professional services were much in demand, and he held clinics almost daily. The social round included cigars and beer with the factor, Mr McTavish, tea with the Bishop and a tête-à-tête between Milton and La Ronde's sister.

Into the Prairies

Finally, on 23 August their wagon train left Fort Garry, trundling west-north-west on the 500-mile journey across uninhabited prairie towards Fort Carlton. The rich, open country was punctuated by lakes, swarming with wild-fowl and, on the whole, they lived off the land with little difficulty.

"The Carlton Trail", as it was known, had been used by Indians since time immemorial and adopted by fur traders and missionaries so that, by 1862, it was well marked, though often rutted. Cutting off an angle in the Assiniboine River, the trail met the river again 250 miles upstream where it flows due south, and on its western bank stood Fort Ellice, where they were able to replenish supplies.

Close to the fort were pitched numerous Indian tepees, or "lodges" to which Milton took a particular fancy. Despite Cheadle's opposition, he persuaded an astonished Indian to part with his family accommodation in exchange for a calumet (a peace-pipe) and a cart cover, under which the Indian, his squaw and children might shelter until he could make another tepee. Tepees were of various sizes, depending upon need, and the number of buffalo hides from which the cover was made; generally, there would be between eight and twenty hides, sewn together with sinews.



Indian tepees made of buffalo hides

In the end, the replacement of their canvas tent proved satisfactory, offering more spacious accommodation, within which a fire could be kept burning on chilly evenings in the spring and autumn.

The trail then lay north-west to the South Saskatchewan River and, 50 miles beyond that, to the parallel-flowing North Saskatchewan. On the near bank of the latter - about 50 miles north of the present city of Saskatoon - stood Fort Carlton, which Milton and Cheadle reached 35 days after leaving Fort Garry. They were welcomed by the factor, Mr Lillie, and invited to dine at his table on fresh buffalo steaks.

Hunting Buffalo

During a leisurely stay at the fort, Milton and Cheadle took part in their first buffalo hunt. The following is an edited version of Cheadle's account:

We rode in line abreast, with La Ronde as captain in the centre. When we arrived within a quarter of a mile of the largest group they began to move slowly off; other groups looked up from their grazing, and then trotted off to join the main body who were still walking quietly along. We now went forward at a canter, and the herd having collected together, broke into a lumbering gallop; but we gained on them rapidly, until we were within about 200 yards, when they went off at speed. "Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried La Ronde, "allez allez!" and away we all went helter skelter, arms brandishing and heels hammering our horses' ribs in true Indian fashion - a mad, wild charge - Milton leading on his old red horse, La Ronde next on the Grande Rouge and Cheadle bringing up the rear on a little roan mare. As we closed with them the herd broke up into bands of three or four. With their head and shoulders covered with long hair and bare quarters they looked like French poodles. I fired both barrels: one beast separated. Dropping into a canter to reload I soon came upon him again and fired one barrel and three of revolver without effect. Knowing I should lose ground if I reloaded, I kept on with one barrel loaded; then up went his tail and he turned to face me with head down at ten yards' range, looking very

*vicious indeed. Just as he turned his broadside and before he charged I fired, aiming behind the shoulder. He turned away again, walked two or three yards, then stretched his legs and died.*¹⁶



A buffalo hunt

The Buffalo hunt lasted a week and, by the time they returned to the fort, there had already been several snow-falls: it was high time to prepare for winter.

Any idea of attempting to live on the open prairies during the winter would have been foolhardy. The country offered scant shelter from the wind and drifting snow, and little material wherewith to build a shelter. It was therefore necessary to live in the forest, which lay some distance to the north. Accordingly, on 10 October they crossed the North Saskatchewan by the fort, and set off in search of a suitable location.

Indians

Since arriving in North America, Milton and Cheadle had come to regard Indians with respect. In an early encounter, Cheadle described an Indian in paint and feathers as having "...a rather fine face, good Roman nose and well-shaped head".¹⁷

An encounter with a group of Cree on the prairies also left a deep impression. Milton and Cheadle invited the them into their lodge. The Indians sat cross-legged in silence for a long time, as a pipe was passed round in native fashion. Eventually the chief launched into a dignified speech in fluent English:

I and my brothers wish to know why you come here. In your own land you are, I know, great chiefs. You have abundance of blankets, tea and salt, tobacco and rum. You have splendid guns, and powder and shot as much as you desire. But there is one thing that you lack – you have no buffalo, and you come here to seek them. I am a great chief also. But the Great Spirit has not dealt with us alike. You he has endowed with riches, while to me he has given the buffalo alone. Why should you visit

this country to destroy the only good thing I possess, simply for your own pleasure?

By degrees it became clear that this elegant complaint was not so much intended to reverse the irresistible tide of buffalo hunting as to exact immediate tribute in the form of guns, blankets and, above all, a copious supply of rum. The attempt, unsuccessful though it was, attracted a good deal of respect on the part of the young Englishmen.

Milton's Liberal up-bringing may have inclined him to adopt a sympathetic and tolerant attitude toward the Indians they met and, generally, their inter-racial relations were harmonious. Nonetheless, they came to realise that the Indians did not share the same ethos as the English. Trading negotiations usually entailed much haggling, whilst hospitality in the form of rum invariably caused trouble: one drink was never enough, and ensuing arguments sometimes led to violence, even if abject apologies were volunteered in the sober light of the following day.



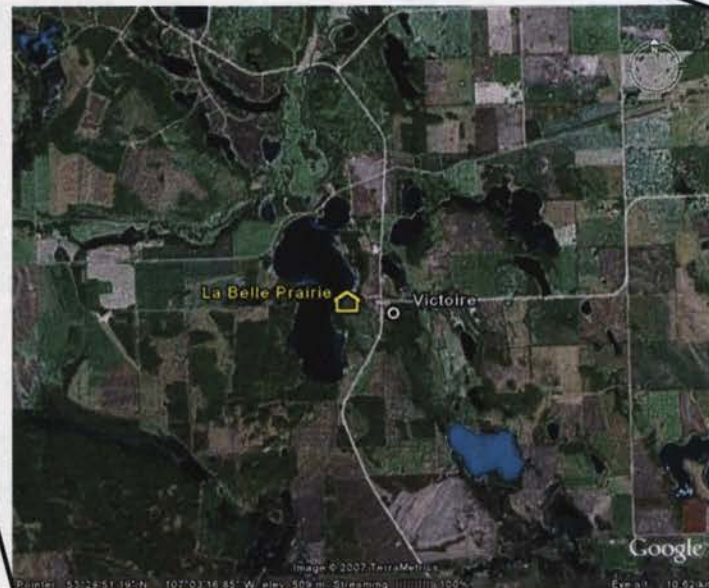
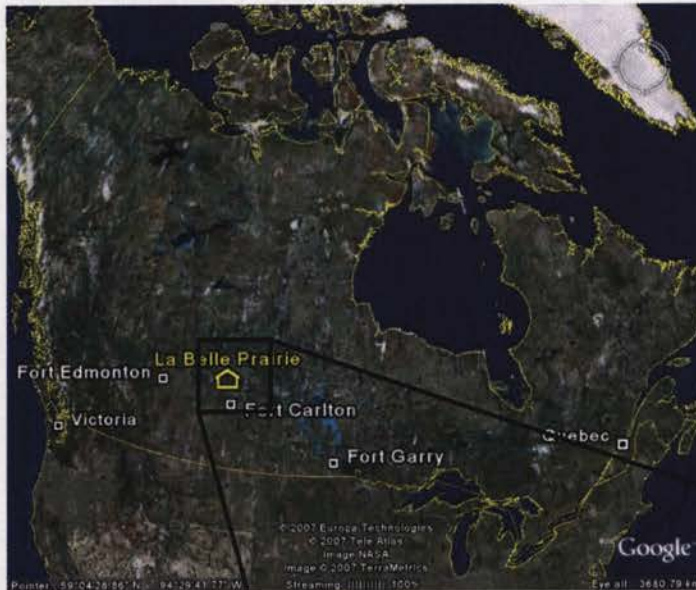
A Blackfoot chief

Only the war-like Sioux worried them. Fortunately, they never came face-to-face with any of that tribe, although they realised later that they had narrowly escaped being massacred. When they passed through Georgetown during the summer, the Sioux were gathering to receive the annuity payments due by the American government in exchange for 28 million acres ceded by the tribe twenty years earlier. The Americans had never been prompt with these payments and now, distracted by the civil war, were positively in default. The Indians, most of whom had travelled far from their traditional hunting lands, quickly exhausted the local supply of wildlife and began to starve. Barely a week after Milton and Cheadle left Georgetown for Fort Garry, the Indians' patience snapped and the Sioux massacred every white man, woman and child they could find. It was a close escape! Now, as they prepared for winter, they were about to find themselves living on intimate terms with Indians.

La Belle Prairie

About four days after leaving Fort Carlton they reached a pretty lake beside about 200 acres of meadow surrounded by wooded hills. Both Milton and Cheadle were enchanted by it, for they called it “La Belle Prairie” and determined to settle there for the winter.

The Lake overlooked by “La Belle Prairie” has since been identified as Morin Lake, lying today on the edge of the small town of Victoire, Saskatchewan, about 100 miles north of Saskatoon.¹⁸



The probable location of “La Belle Prairie” and Fort Milton

They discovered that their nearest neighbours, living some three miles distant, were a family of Wood Cree Indians who, as it turned out, were to become their companions, servants and comrades in adversity throughout the long, bitter winter, when their survival would depend upon what they could kill.

Fort Milton

October was now well-advanced, and there was no time to be lost before building winter accommodation. The site selected was a promontory projecting into the lake and, under La Ronde's direction, they built a log cabin. It comprised a single room measuring fifteen feet by thirteen, six feet high at the front and five at the back, to allow for a sloping roof made of young pine logs overlaid with marsh grass and weighted with earth. To give extra height and warmth inside, the floor was excavated to a depth of two feet. It was equipped with a door made from wood cannibalised from one of the carts, windows made of parchment and a stone fire-place engineered by Milton.¹⁹ Admiring their handiwork, La Ronde solemnly named the establishment 'Fort Milton'.



Fort Milton

Where the Buffalo Roam

Whilst at Fort Carlton Milton and Cheadle took the opportunity to replenish their supply of pemmican, but it would not last all winter, and so they must needs live off the land. Most birds and water-fowl had already migrated south for the winter and frozen lakes offered few opportunities for fishing. The principal local source of winter food was moose, but it was not in plentiful supply. Buffalo had therefore to be regarded as the main potential source of fresh meat.

But the plains where the buffalo roamed lay a hundred miles to the south and so lengthy expeditions were necessary. Snow-shoes offered the best means of personal travel, but both Milton and Cheadle found them immensely tiring to use. They also discovered that horses were ineffective beasts of burden in deep snow: here the Indians' dog trains came into their own, although the task of dragging the kill back home was exhausting for men and dogs alike.

With their native friends they killed about a dozen buffalo during the course of the winter. On the first expedition, Milton suffered severe frostbite, and he did not repeat the experience. Cheadle, on the other hand, became a

tolerably good hunter, although it took him some time to get the hang of stalking. On one occasion one of the Indians went off to the opposite flank of a herd of buffalo, having instructed Cheadle to open fire upon a pre-arranged signal, but Cheadle misunderstood. The Indian repeated the signal several times until the buffalo took notice and galloped off, whereupon there were furious recriminations. On the whole, though, these co-operative expeditions were mutually advantageous.

Trapping

Whilst there were plenty of small four-legged animals in the forest, only in extremis were they regarded as food. Beaver, marten, mink, lynx, fox and bear inhabited the woods but even the Indians considered their meat unappetising. On the other hand, their fur was valuable to the Indians and other trappers as a medium of exchange for guns, blankets, pemmican and other items available at HBC posts that made life on the prairies easier.

Milton had little interest in trapping, but Cheadle was keen to learn the necessary skills: how to distinguish the tracks of each animal, and how to build traps for each. He was an apt pupil, hunting sometimes with La Ronde and sometimes with a young Indian boy named Misquapamayoo who, despite his tender years, proved to be a brave and resourceful hunter, as well as an agreeable companion.



A marten inspecting a trap



The crafty wolverine



Beaver skins awaiting inspection at an HBC trading post

Despite his diligence, Cheadle quickly discovered that trapping was not a lucrative occupation. At Fort Carlton the price of a gun was 12 "made" beaver (ie prime beaver skins in good condition) and such a quantity was hard won. He and his companions maintained lengthy trap lines throughout the winter, but too often the traps were raided before the prey was collected. Usually the culprit was the wolverine, who, by an almost human intellect, was adept at removing and eating the trapped animal without itself getting caught.

Nevertheless, Cheadle persevered. In a magazine article published in 1867 he gives a detailed account of his winter-long campaign to secure the fur of the prized silver fox. In doing so he writes coyly of making presents to his "...fair relations and friends at home," and goes on, "and there is one, I thought, who deserved the prize and would, I half believed, be proud to wear a gift of mine...". After several failures, late in the winter he succeeded in trapping what would have been a fine specimen, but by the time he returned to retrieve it carrion crows had already picked over the corpse and ruined the skin.²⁰

Winter Closes in

By degrees they settled into a kind of routine. Cheadle was a more apt hunter than Milton who, generally remaining in the cabin, became an accomplished cook. Yet, despite devoting most of their days to trapping and hunting, this little community came so close to starvation that they were compelled to send La Ronde back to Fort Garry for supplies – a round trip of 1,200 miles. The expedition across uninhabited prairie in mid-winter took him three months and demanded great courage and resourcefulness. But even while La Ronde was away, the imminent threat of starvation forced Cheadle to make the 70-mile journey to Fort Carlton to buy pemmican and flour. Returning in February, Cheadle's face, neck, arms and thighs became frost-bitten; the fahrenheit thermometer recorded 70° of frost (-39°C) and, despite lying (as usual) with feet towards the fire, he found sleep impossible.

But there were other diversions. In November an old Indian visited Fort Milton with his daughter, Dalilah (sic), offering her for sale. The offer was declined, but a few days later Milton found an excuse to visit the Indians, where he flirted with the girl. The infatuation continued and, returning from a hunting trip on one occasion, Cheadle was "disgusted"²¹ to find Dalilah comfortably established in the hut with Milton! There was a row; Milton disappeared with Dalilah and although he returned alone a few days later, their intimacy continued for most of the winter.

Signs of Spring

At long last it began to thaw and Milton, Cheadle and La Ronde left Fort Milton for the last time. Cheadle's *Journal* entry for 3 April reads:

Set out about noon, leaving the house without a tear, but feeling some regret at parting from our winter quarters, where we had certainly endured much hardship, but however had some enjoyment & at least learnt much of Indian life.

Three days later they reached Fort Carlton, and paid off La Ronde, who was to return to Fort Garry, and engaged a powerfully-built French half-breed, named Baptiste Supernat, to guide them through the Rocky Mountains.

Ever Westward

Although there was now a general thaw during the daytime, the river ice was still thick enough to bear the weight of the carts as Milton and Cheadle crossed the river from Fort Carlton for the last time, to begin the 350-mile trek to Fort Edmonton.

Although the North Saskatchewan River linked Fort Carlton to Fort Edmonton but, the river made a southward loop at this point, so that the trail struck north-westward across undulating country, to meet the river again shortly before reaching the intermediate post of Fort Pitt.

The main obstacles were the numerous streams, now swollen by melting snow, which were generally negotiated by floating the carts across, or by raft. To their relief, survival was much easier now: the migration of wildfowl northwards was in full swing, and they were able to supplement their diet of pemmican by such delicacies as duck, goose and prairie grouse.

Cheadle says surprisingly little about the techniques used in navigating across the expanse of the prairies. Maps are mentioned in passing, and they would almost certainly have had the quite detailed maps made by the Palliser expedition and published in 1860, yet Cheadle says nothing about the use of the sextant which he bought in Quebec. Some *voyageurs* estimated the distance covered by counting the revolutions of the cart wheels but, again, Cheadle says nothing about that practice. Of course, the trails across the prairies were regularly used and therefore well-defined, and no doubt they relied on their guides' experience in estimating progress. Even so, it is surprising that such a methodical man as Cheadle seems to have bothered so little about measuring either their position or the correct time.

By contrast, Sir Sandford Fleming's journey over the same route nine years later, was more systematic. Fleming was Engineer-in-Chief of Canadian Pacific and Intercolonial Railways, and was surveying a route for a railway line through the Rockies. Although he lacked a mariner's chronometer, he had a reliable watch and kept it, not at Greenwich, but at Montreal time knowing, however, that the longitude of Montreal was 73° 30' west. Each day, he measured the elapsed time from sunrise to sunset, and added half that time to the time of sunrise. West of Montreal that gave a time later than noon and if that were, say, 2pm, he would know that his position was two hours behind Montreal. At four minutes of time per degree, he would thus calculate his longitude to be 103° 30' west (73° 30' + 30° 00'). Having by this means determined midday by local time, a noon sun sight taken through his sextant revealed his latitude and thus pinpointed his position.²²

When they reached Fort Pitt they found hoards of Indians there. The Cree and Blackfoot tribes – traditional enemies – had recently made peace and were to be seen together in large groups, eying each other up and down: they were not above stealing horses from each other, and the peace was fragile.

A New Servant

Milton and Cheadle thought it wise to get on with their business and move on as soon as possible. They needed a second servant and at Fort Pitt they engaged another half-breed. His name was Louis Battenotte, (or possibly Patenaude) but he was generally known as "The Assiniboine", in which tribe he had been brought up. The appointment was not without its complications, however. Before they left Fort Pitt, the Assiniboine's youngest child died after a sudden illness, and the terms of his engagement were changed to permit his wife and 13-year-old son to accompany him. Moreover, although he had a reputation as a hunter, he possessed but one hand, the left having been shattered by an exploding gun, leaving only two fingers.

And, as if this were not enough, it was later learned that he had killed another half-breed in a drunken squabble; in mitigation it was said that the deed had been done in a moment of passion, and that the murdered man was a notorious bully who gave great provocation. This was long before the foundation of North-west Mounted Police at a time when justice was administered by the Hudson's Bay Company. In this case, the penalty meted out by the local chief factor was dismissal from the Company's service.²³

Lest this catalogue of disaster might suggest that the Assiniboine should never have been engaged, it must be said now that without him and his family, it is doubtful whether Milton and Cheadle would have survived the rest of the expedition.

Illness

Shortly after leaving Fort Pitt Milton suffered an epileptic attack. Such episodes seem to have occurred every month or two, but in both the book and Cheadle's *Journal* they are usually passed over euphemistically by saying that Milton was "seedy". On this occasion, however, Cheadle tells us that Milton had strong symptoms of a fit, and that it was alleviated by getting Milton to sniff rum and administering carbo animalis.²⁴ This preparation is made by heating animal charcoal in a sealed vessel,²⁵ and is still available in tablet or powder form as a homeopathic remedy.

About 90 miles short of Fort Edmonton the trail crossed the North Saskatchewan at Snake Hills. The river was wide, and too turbulent to float the carts across. In the end, the problem was solved by constructing a canoe from buffalo hide and – not without a soaking – they crossed safely with all their belongings, arriving at the fort a few days later.

It was in such situations that Milton's engineering bent came into its own. He had an aptitude for building things and making them work. He had already shown this skill at Fort Milton where he alone succeeded in building an effective fireplace and chimney. He also became chief fire-lighter because of his ability to make a fire more quickly than anyone else: he would insist on doing so at the least opportunity, often infuriating Cheadle because of the consequent delay to their journey. Milton would certainly have been the brains behind the makeshift canoe, just as he was also the chief raft engineer.

Fort Edmonton

Fort Edmonton was then one of the Hudson's Bay Company's largest posts; it was an entrepot, collecting furs and shipping them by its own fleet of 'York Boats' down the North Saskatchewan to Norway House on Lake Winnipeg, on the first stage of a voyage of a thousand miles to the shores of Hudson Bay. When Milton and Cheadle arrived the Company brigades had come in from the west, beyond the Rocky Mountains, and from the Peace and Mackenzie river basins far to the north, and the place was a hive of activity as the boats were loaded.



Fort Edmonton (c. 1863)

The fort journal records the arrival of Milton and Cheadle but not much else about their stay. Perhaps, at that busy period of the year, they were encouraged to keep out of the way.



A "Brigade" of York Boats on the Saskatchewan River



A replica York Boat at Fort Edmonton Park in 2007

News had reached the fort that bears had threatened the tiny Roman Catholic mission at St Albert,²⁶ nine miles to the north-west; neither Milton nor Cheadle could resist the priest's appeal for help to hunt down the bears, and the next day they were ready for the chase. The hunt was unsuccessful, but they were much impressed by Father Lacombe,²⁷ a missionary who brought not only Christianity but, through farming, a means of livelihood to

the Cree and Métis²⁸ communities there. Father Lacombe, who had established the religious community at St Albert and built a small chapel there, was assisted by three nuns whose diary for 15 May (the day of the hunt) reads as follows:

A Lord and Doctor from London, who are travelling solely for the pleasure of seeing the country dine with us. At first sight, they looked a good deal more like aboriginals than Englishmen".²⁹

Perhaps that opinion is not surprising, considering the life that Milton and Cheadle had led for many months since arriving in the prairies. Father Lacombe's chapel still stands on a hill overlooking the town of St Albert, beside a modern church, and is Alberta's oldest building.



Father Lacombe's Chapel at St Albert

Returning to the fort, Milton and Cheadle prepared for their trek across the Rocky Mountains; but they little realised what hazards and privations that the journey held in store. The trail lay through dense forest and across rivers swollen by melting snow. Carts, which had provided an efficient means of transport in open country, would be useless in such confined terrain, and so stores and equipment must be carried by pack horses.

After Mackenzie's discovery of an overland passage to the Pacific, the first 'commercial' route across the Rockies was probably that pioneered in 1806 by a Hudson's Bay Company trader named Joseph Howse, who followed a tributary of the North Saskatchewan to a pass which led him over the mountains to the Blaeberry and Columbia Rivers on the west, and gave his name to both the river on the eastern side and the pass to which it gave access. He was followed the next year by David Thompson who mapped the Howse Pass (5,003 ft) for the first time.³⁰ It was a convenient trade route because it linked the North Saskatchewan (which flowed past Fort Edmonton) and the Columbia, which in turn provided a serviceable 600-mile waterway to the Pacific.

Shortly afterwards, however, hostile Indians effectively closed the Howse Pass and in 1811 Thompson prospected the Athabasca Pass (5,750 ft) seventy miles to the north as an alternative.³¹ The Athabasca Pass was a treacherous route over very high terrain but, like the Howse Pass, it provided access to the Columbia River without an intervening glacier. It immediately became the crucial link in the chain of communication between York Factory on the shores of Hudson Bay and Fort George, where the Columbia flowed into the Pacific on the boundary between the present states of Washington

and Oregon. For over forty years at least one brigade crossed in each direction annually; typically the 'Columbia Express', as it was known, would make the trans-continental journey three-and-a-half months.³²

The more northerly route which Milton and Cheadle were to take was known as the Leather Pass. At 3,734 feet, it is 2,000 feet lower than the Athabasca Pass, 50 miles to the south-east. For this reason it was used to transport heavy loads of dressed leather for making tents, moccasins, bags and pack cords to the district west of the mountains where natural sources of leather, such as moose and elk, were scarce.³³ Having himself experienced the difficulties presented by the Athabasca Pass the Governor the Hudson's Bay Company, George Simpson, instructed James McMillan to prospect the Leather Pass in 1825 and the following year Company traders McGillivray and McDougal took a pack train of 500 hides from Henry House, near the confluence of the Athabasca and Miette rivers west into New Caledonia.³⁴ It later came to be known as the Yellowhead Pass taking its name from an Iroquois trapper with unusually fair hair, nicknamed 'Tête Jaune', who had acted as McMillan's guide.

But in 1855 technology offered an easier means of transportation: the completion of a railroad across the Panama isthmus provided a lengthy but far more convenient trade route between the east and west coasts of North America. Consequently, by 1860 the brigade traffic over the perilous Athabasca Pass had ceased.³⁵ On the other hand, traffic over the Leather Pass continued, and tended to increase after the discovery of gold in the Cariboo in 1858.

A New Companion

Whilst Milton and Cheadle assembled their supplies at Fort Edmonton, they were importuned by a middle-aged Irishman named O'Beirne who wished to accompany them through the mountains. He was an opinionated, indolent buffoon, lacking in all practical sense. Always with plenty to say for himself he was prone to name-dropping. After Cambridge, he tried the law, journalism and teaching before working in India in some mysterious capacity, and then becoming secretary to a planter in Louisiana. Upon the outbreak of the civil war, he was so terrified by being given charge of the local home guard that he decamped overnight, leaving all his belongings behind, and fled north to Fort Garry. There he joined the Overlanders who, as they crossed the prairies, found him to be such a burden that they expelled him, leaving him to find his own way to Fort Edmonton. There he had survived in idleness for nearly a year, relying upon the diminishing goodwill of its inhabitants, and finally perceived his salvation in Milton and Cheadle. Cheadle considered him to be:

...a great humbug & ne'er-do-well...seems a well-informed fellow, however, & nearly knocked my head off with Latin quotations. Horribly afraid of bears.³⁶

They evidently saw through his blarney, and so it is hard to understand why they eventually agreed to take him with them. Perhaps they regarded him as a figure of fun and, in their youthful self-confidence, thought that they could compensate for his deficiencies. They were wrong.

Just before they set out Richard Hardisty, the chief factor at Fort Edmonton, urged Cheadle not to attempt the journey but his advice cut little ice. Milton was determined to reach the goldfields, and nothing would dissuade him.

Into the Forest

This curious party – Milton, Cheadle, O'Beirne, the guide Baptiste and the Assiniboine family - eventually left Fort Edmonton on 5 June, travelling by way of St Albert to bid farewell to Father Lacombe.



Negotiating the forest trail

Fifty miles further on, the track entered dense forest. The next 200 miles to Jasper House had been pioneered only five years before³⁷ and, whilst Baptiste's eye could detect the trail, the fact that no travellers had come that way since the previous autumn meant that much of the road had to be cut afresh.³⁸

In the forest the trees were so close together that the horses' packs frequently became wedged, whilst the natural cycle of decay and new growth left fallen timber over which men and horses had to pick their way. Moreover, there was the nightmare of musteg - a native Indian word describing unstable soil and underbrush with a high water content, where a thin crust gives the appearance of firm ground, but where horses would regularly sink up to their girths.

Throughout his *Journal* (but especially whilst crossing the Rockies) Cheadle complains of Milton's reluctance to rise in the mornings. Occasionally epileptic symptoms were present although his illness seems to have threatened the expedition rather less than his laziness, which often caused serious delay.

Milton could also be arrogant and argumentative. It was a custom of the country that the guide should determine where and when to camp, but one evening Milton quarrelled bitterly with Baptiste about the choice of a site, and the following day the guide deserted, taking with him a good horse and the best axe. Thus, they were left in the wilderness without a guide: two young Englishmen, a one-armed native and his dependents and the encumbrance of O'Beirne. What should they do? Ever optimists, Milton and Cheadle

assigned Baptiste's emoluments to the Assiniboine against his assurance of loyalty, and determined to continue.

Flies and mosquitoes constantly tormented both men and horses; a good fire helped to keep them at bay and, whilst resting at mid-day on one occasion Milton made a large fire to relieve the horses' suffering; but whilst struggling to gain the best position, they kicked some embers into the thickly-set pines and, in no time at all, the surrounding woods were ablaze. Eventually, by using water from a nearby pond and chopping down some saplings, they managed to isolate the fire and prevent total disaster.



Fire in the forest

Cheadle writes:

Whilst I was energetically cutting down trees and crying for water, I observed O'Beirne sitting down, tugging away at a boot. I shouted to him very angrily, "Mr O'Beirne, what on earth are you doing! Why the devil don't you bring some water?" "I can't; I've only got one boot on", he said. "Are you a fool staying to put on a boot when the forest will be on fire in a minute, and you burnt to a cinder?" This frightened him and he jumped up and limped up with a pan of water very assiduously.

Among the Mountains



Roche Miette

Three weeks after leaving Edmonton, and after cutting their way through over a hundred gruelling miles of forest, the trail descended towards the Athabasca River. As they did so, the distinctive profile of Roche Miette came into view, standing like a sentinel guarding the approach to the valley.

They had crossed a watershed: the North Saskatchewan at Edmonton empties into Hudson Bay and the Atlantic, whereas the Athabasca flows north towards the Arctic Ocean.

Below Roche Miette a spur of land projected into the river, blocking their path. The Athabasca's flow in spring flood is ten times greater than at its mid-winter low.³⁹ Spring comes late in the Rockies; this was early July and the melt-water was barely past its peak; consequently, the river was too deep and the current too strong to permit fording, and the only solution was to climb the intervening ridge. It was a long climb. The ascent of Syncline Ridge is testing enough for a 21st century hiker carrying a small pack; but Milton and Cheadle were obliged to coax laden horses – not to mention an unwilling O'Beirne - up the steep and unrelenting gradient that sometimes approached 45°. The horses were wont to lie down under their burdens and much persuasion was needed to keep them on the move.



Ascending Syncline Ridge

As they climbed, the valley spread out below them and Jasper House could be seen in a forest clearing on the far bank about two miles away; the Company post comprised a single shack and was unoccupied at that time of year, but it was a comforting landmark.⁴⁰



Jasper House

Presently, the gradient eased and they rested to admire the spectacular scene before them. There, Cheadle notes, "We had one of the most magnificent views it was ever our fortune to behold".⁴¹ To the south, the river widened into a large lake (now known as Jasper Lake) and the cone-shaped Pyramid Mountain glinted in the distance; other snow-capped mountains lay in all directions and through it all rushed the Athabasca 1,200 feet below them.



Jasper Lake and Pyramid Mountain from Syncline Ridge in 1863



The same view in 2007

The forest clearing where Jasper House stood is still clearly visible

At last their little caravan reached a defile in the ridge, through which they descended to the valley floor, and camped on a sand bar opposite Jasper House.

Crossing the Athabasca

The river itself was their next obstacle: it was essential to cross it in order to approach the Leather Pass, and the present site seemed to be as good (or as bad) as any. They began to build a raft, but as they were doing so a Company man on a foraging expedition arrived in camp and advised them to continue along the eastern bank and to cross further upstream; by doing so, he explained, they would avoid having to cross a large tributary joining the Athabasca on the far bank.⁴² Accordingly, Milton and Cheadle continued for a further nine miles to a point below Mount Colin.

There the swiftly flowing river was a good two hundred yards wide, but its surface was calm, whilst level ground on both sides offered suitable launch and landing sites.⁴³ Typically, O'Beirne was nowhere to be seen as they again began to build a raft but reappeared to offer his services just as it was finished.



Rafting across the Athabasca. Viewed from the eastern bank, the valley of the Snaring River can be seen beyond the far bank

The horses were unloaded and made to swim across, whilst the rest of the party piloted their craft across the river without mishap, but for their mistake – which they were bitterly to regret – in leaving one of their two remaining axes behind.

About eight miles upstream from the crossing, where the modern town of Jasper stands, the trail left the Athabasca and turned westward, entering the valley of its tributary, the Miette. The ascent from the Athabasca to the Leather Pass was very gradual, but the trail was obstructed by fallen trees and boulders, and crossed the river repeatedly: in a single afternoon they were obliged to ford the torrent six times. O'Beirne was terrified and, yelling uncontrollably, had to be coaxed across between Milton and the Assiniboine's wife.

Crossing the Great Divide

After three days, and to their immense relief, the trail left the Miette and following day they were elated to come upon a stream flowing westward: the ascent had been so gradual that they had not realised that the great divide had been crossed: they had entered British Columbia and all the rivers now flowed down to the Pacific!

They camped beside the infelicitously named Buffalo Dung Lake (now known more delicately as Yellowhead Lake). A glorious morning dawned the next day and this, together with their sense of achievement at having reached the highest point in their journey put them all in a good humour. Milton admired a particularly fine mountain to the south, and promptly named it Mount Fitzwilliam. Not to be out-done, Cheadle chose one immediately to the north, to which he gave the name Mount Bingley, after his Yorkshire birthplace; he notes that it was higher than Mount Fitzwilliam, but in that

he was mistaken.⁴⁴ Mount Fitzwilliam is a single, prominent peak known as the guardian of the Yellowhead Pass⁴⁵ and still bears that name, but Cheadle chose a range four peaks close together, which the authorities have since named Yellowhead Mountain, reserving the western-most, and highest, peak as Bingley Peak.



Mount Fitzwilliam



Yellowhead Mountain
(Bingley Peak is the furthest left of the range)

Regrettably, this moment of reverie was to be followed by great difficulties, as they made their way towards the Pacific. Two miles beyond Buffalo Dung Lake the young Fraser River flowed down from their left. After struggling through numerous mustegs, they came to Moose Lake, whose “almost perpendicular mountain-sides” and driftwood-encumbered shores forced them into the lake itself; one day they struggled on well into the night, unable to see where they were going, before reaching a level camp-site.

Disaster Strikes

Beyond the lake the trail took them below the towering height of Mount Robson – since discovered, at 12,972 feet, to be the highest mountain in the

Canadian Rockies. Here the river became a rushing torrent. Several times horses were carried away and had to be rescued, until at length one was swept away beyond recovery, carrying with it all their tea, tobacco, salt, letters of credit, passports and most of their ammunition. It was only with the help of local Indians that they reached the encampment at Tête Jaune Cache without serious injury.



Crossing the Fraser

Here they found a much needed opportunity for recuperation amongst a Shushwap band. They dearly wanted to replenish their supplies, but the Indians had not the resources of a Company fort and Milton and Cheadle had no money and little else with which to barter.



Leaving the Fraser at Tête Jaune Cache,
Milton and Cheadle turned south towards the North Thompson valley

Tête Jaune Cache lies in a valley in the shape of an inverted triangle, with its apex to the south and the Fraser flowing along its northerly base from east to west. Cheadle notes that, although they had succeeded in crossing the

main chain of the Rockies, they were still in the midst of the mountains,⁴⁶ whose parallel north-west/south-east ranks continue in echelon towards the coast. This great massif, known as the Columbia Mountains, forces the Fraser to flow north-west for nearly 200 miles before turning south towards the coast.

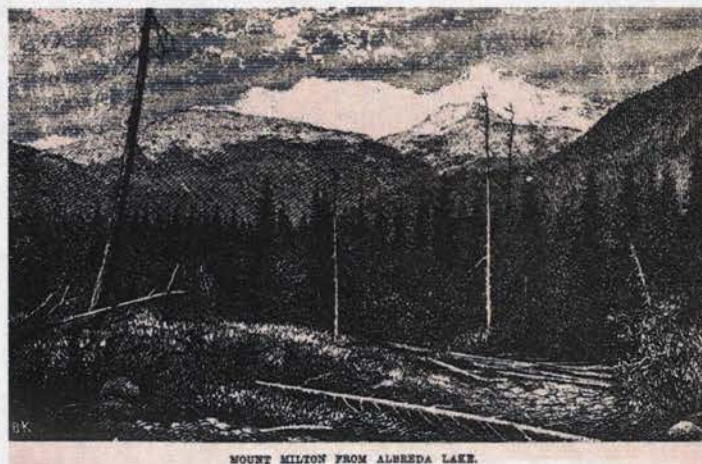
Towards the North Thompson

That, the Indians told them, was the route taken by most of the Overlanders the previous autumn, with the object of reaching the Cariboo goldfields from the north. The remaining group of 30 decided to head south towards the North Thompson River and Fort Kamloops, which was the route Milton and Cheadle now took.

They had few comforts, one of which - tobacco - they had lost when the horse was carried away. Smoking had given them all much solace in the evenings, and in desperation they resorted to kinnikinnik - a mixture of dried dogwood bark and leaves used by the Indians. But its preparation was time-consuming, and the result unpalatable, with a depressing effect upon morale.

On the second day out from Tête Jaune Cache they faced a crossing of Canoe River,⁴⁷ which was broad, deep and in full spate. It swept their raft along like matchwood and all their strength was needed to pole across to the far bank. Just as they reached it the raft was forced beneath an overhanging tree, causing Milton and Mrs Assiniboine to be caught up in its branches, where they hung precariously above the raging torrent. Milton, who was nearer to the shore, managed to scramble to safety but poor Mrs Assiniboine, who was further along the branch, dangled half-submerged until Milton managed to hold her by passing his belt around her waist. Finally, with the aid of a rope, they managed to bring her, numb with cold, to the shore.

Two days later they breasted the North Thompson watershed and, so encouraged, Milton gave the name of his aunt Albreda,⁴⁸ to a lake at the summit; since then, the stream flowing from it, a mountain and even a tourist hotel have all taken the same name. To the south "...a magnificent mountain, covered with glaciers..." appeared to block the valley before them, and to this Cheadle generously gave the name of Mount Milton.



MOUNT MILTON FROM ALBRED A LAKE.

The Temptation of the Goldfields

After another two days the trail reached the North Thompson, which flowed down from its source in the mountains to the west – that is to say, from the general direction in which lay the Cariboo goldfields. Milton, who was determined to visit the goldfields, wanted to get there by following the Thompson upstream; he evidently assumed that a crossing of the intervening, unexplored Cariboo Mountains would be a mere bagatelle. Cheadle pointed out that food was running low and that by following the Overlanders' trail downstream, to the south, they were bound to reach civilisation at Fort Kamloops.



Crossing the North Thompson

Milton reluctantly conceded. They forded the river to follow the Overlanders' trail but, since O'Beirne mistrusted his horse, he insisted on holding onto the animal's tail as he waded across the swollen stream.



The trail comes to an end

Slaughter Camp

A few days later the trail suddenly ended in a clearing. On a tree were inscribed the ominous words, "Slaughter Camp". Looking around, they saw clear evidence that the Overlanders had butchered their animals and that

enough timber had been felled to make several rafts; it was plain that the Overlanders had chosen to travel onward by river.

This was a considerable blow. The river was now in flood and it would have been too dangerous for such a small party to attempt to navigate rafts down a turbulent stream beset with rocks and rapids. Moreover, they dare not abandon their horses: there was little food, and survival might depend upon having horses to kill. They therefore decided to cut their way through the dense forest of the Thompson's narrow valley, where no white man had yet penetrated.

Cheadle writes:

No-one who has not seen a primeval forest, where trees of gigantic size have grown and fallen undisturbed for ages, can have any idea of the collection of timber, or the impenetrable character of such a region. The fallen trunks...in every stage of decay lay piled around, frequently forming barriers six or seven feet high on every side. The ground...was covered with a thick growth of American dogwood and arelea - the latter, a tough-stemmed trailer, often growing as high as the shoulders, and covered on the stem and leaves with sharp spines which pierced our clothes, and made the hands and legs of the pioneers scarlet with myriads of punctures. The horses met with continual disasters - miring in bogs, falling over rocks or getting helplessly entangled in fallen timber.⁴⁹

It was back-breaking work. They reduced rations to two scanty meals a day, occasionally eked out by partridges, squirrels, martens and even skunks.

On 1 August their spirits were lifted by the sight of a majestic, snow-clad mountain that dominated the valley ahead; to this Milton gallantly returned his companion's earlier compliment by naming it Mount Cheadle.



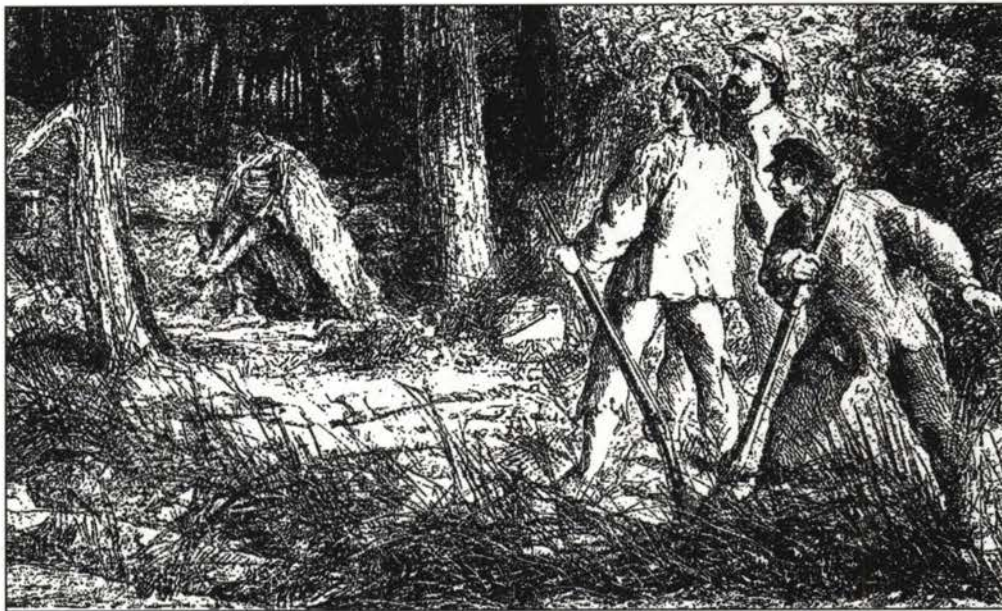
Mount Cheadle

Bravely they fought on, the Assiniboine clearing the way with their remaining axe wielded by his surviving arm, and making about two miles a

day. Once they shot a bear cub but, ten days later - and despite going on half-rations - their food ran out.

The Headless Indian

The next day, returning from an unsuccessful hunting expedition, the Assiniboine made a macabre discovery: the clothed but headless body of an Indian. The corpse was in a sitting posture, with legs crossed and the cervical vertebrae protruding, but the skull was nowhere to be seen.



The Headless Indian

An axe (which Milton appropriated) and the remains of a horse lay nearby and Cheadle concluded that the man had died of starvation after being compelled to eat the animal. But how had he lost his head, and where was it?⁵⁰ In 1872 Sandford Fleming's surveying party discovered the missing skull 150 yards away, but the explanation of the unfortunate man's death remains a mystery.⁵¹



The Indian's skull and belongings found nine years later

On the brink of starvation as they were, the discovery did nothing to improve their mood: if they were to survive, there was nothing for it but to shoot one of the horses, and this they did the following morning. After that, there were only three bullets left, which left little scope for more hunting.

Rapids

Presently the valley became a narrow, steep-sided canyon constraining the river to a quarter of its previous width; the wooded hillsides on each side fell almost sheer to the water which rushed forward in a torrent. There was nothing for it but to cut a path through the forest high above the river and to force their weary, laden horses steeply upward. Progress was so painfully slow that it took five days to traverse the eight-mile gorge. At one point Cheadle realised that O'Beirne was missing; tethering his own horse, he went back to find the man helplessly dithering, and complaining that his horse had slipped and fallen over the edge of the precipice. O'Beirne had given the beast up as lost but when Cheadle investigated he discovered the poor animal a hundred feet below, astride the branch of a tree, which had saved him from crashing onto the rocks below. They scrambled down, unloaded the horse, got him off the tree and led him to a lower part of the trail from which they resumed the climb, the horse apparently none the worse for its ordeal.

Eventually, the river became confined between two lofty rocks no more than twenty feet apart at the base. Through this gap rushed a mighty torrent which the Assiniboine dramatically declared to be "Porte d'Enfer" (Hell's Gate). Certainly no raft could have survived it.



Hell's Gate, September 2007. The water would have been considerably higher and the torrent greater when Milton and Cheadle passed by in early August

They feared for the Overlanders, and with good reason: those travellers had indeed found the rapids impassable. One man was drowned and the rest

were compelled to abandon their rafts and to make a similarly exhausting portage above the gorge, before building new rafts below Hell's Gate.⁵² Milton and Cheadle named the eight-mile stretch of rapids after Sir Roderick Murchison, president of both the Royal Geographical Society and the British Association.

Despair

Next day the food ran out again, and they sacrificed a second horse. Tempers had begun to fray. Milton quarrelled with the Assiniboine's son; O'Beirne falsely accused the Assiniboine of trying to murder him; why, asked the Assiniboine, had Milton not chosen to cross the mountains by one of the explored southern passes? How long, they all wondered, could this torment continue?

When compared with a modern map, the writings of Milton and Cheadle contain enough detail to estimate their daily positions quite accurately. This reveals that they consistently over-estimated the distance travelled, especially whilst negotiating the appalling conditions along the North Thompson. Generally, Cheadle overestimated by a factor of about two: on 1 August, for example, he thought they had made six or seven miles instead of barely three, judging by his topographical references.

Paradoxically, this unfounded optimism may well have encouraged them, for they had nothing against which to measure their progress. An elderly Shushwap woman at Tête Jaune Cache had told them they would reach Fort Kamloops in eight days, but that intelligence was proved faulty at an early stage and thereafter they knew neither the actual distance nor how long the journey might take. Thus, the fact that they were still in the wilderness did not *of itself* distress them, so long as they thought they had made good progress against the odds each day

Even so, Cheadle began to doubt whether Milton's health and stamina would hold out:

I have suffered horribly from anxiety the last few weeks on Milton's account. Apathetic, holding back, utterly reckless of the value of time, not appreciating the awkwardness of our position. I having no fear for myself but for him on account of his being unable to walk or endure prolonged fatigue & quarrelling about small things of no consequence⁵³.

Whilst they were thus on the brink of despair, there was a rustling in the forest ahead, and suddenly there appeared before them an Indian and his squaw carrying a papoose on her back: the first human faces they had seen for five weeks.

Open Country

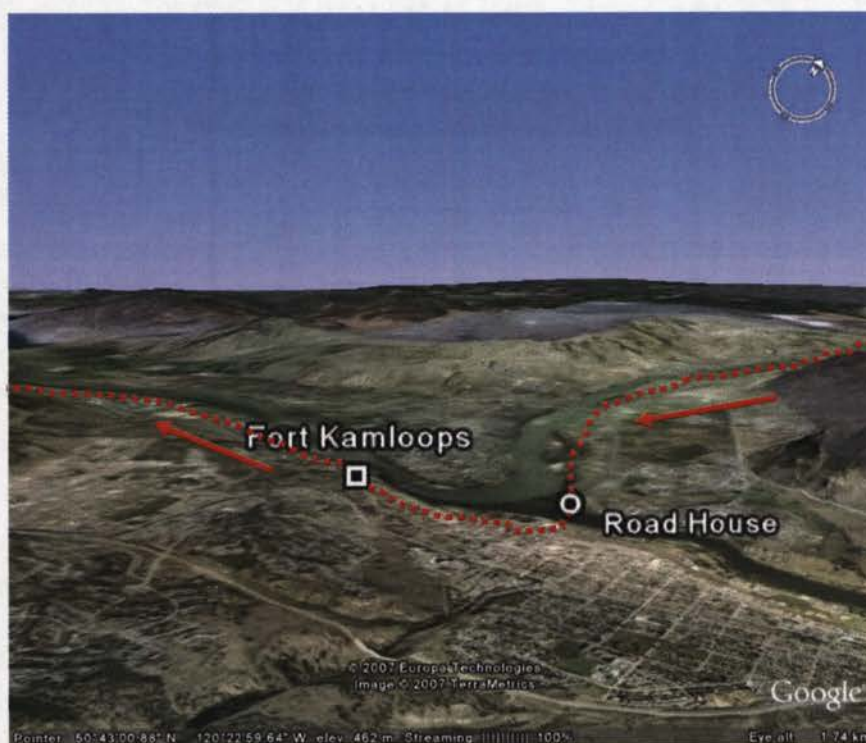
From this point things began to get better. The valley broadened out; the going became easier and there were berries to eat. A band of Indians helped them across the Clearwater River. The remaining horses, skin and bone as

they were, even broke into an occasional canter and they found that, instead of struggling to cover two or three miles a day, they were making twenty-five.

Food remained a problem for, although the Indians were willing to supply such delicacies as rabbits and potatoes, the travellers had almost no belongings with which to barter: nevertheless, the last of Milton's shirts and a pair of threadbare trousers were sacrificed in this cause. To eke out their supplies Milton and Cheadle made the most of the abundant crops of berries along the way, until - having failed to be sufficiently discriminating - Cheadle became violently ill.

Civilisation at Last!

Eventually, late in the evening of 28 August, five days after meeting the Indian family, the whole party staggered, emaciated and barely clothed, into a road house immediately across the river from Fort Edmonton. Milton, Cheadle, O'Beirne and the Assiniboine family ate that evening as they had not eaten since leaving Fort Edmonton; and after a long night's sleep followed by a substantial breakfast, they began to feel able to face the world once more.



Kamloops: the North Thompson (upper right) joins the South Thompson (flowing from the lower right) and continues westward (left)

After breakfast Milton and Cheadle crossed the river to the fort: the 220-mile trek from Tête Jaune Cache had taken them 40 days. Their first task was to buy new suits; then, casting their rags into the Thompson, they both took a long, luxurious bathe. Other luxuries in which they now indulged with abandon were tea and tobacco, the lack of which had been a great discomfort since their supplies were lost in the Fraser.

Three weeks later *The British Columbian* reported Lord Milton's arrival at Fort Kamloops, noting that "...his Lordship arrived in the enjoyment of excellent health."⁵⁴ – if they had only known the truth!

As a consequence of the accident in the Fraser, Milton and Cheadle were penniless and quite unable to substantiate their identities. They therefore felt obliged to explain their predicament to the chief trader at Kamloops, Mr McKay. Fortunately for them, McKay was disposed to believe their story, for he happened to know that no less a personage than the Colonial Secretary in London had written to the Governor in Victoria seeking news of Milton's expedition. At any rate, he offered not only to allow them credit but to lend them horses for the next stage of their journey.

As it happened, McKay was on safe ground for, unbeknown to any of them, Lord Fitzwilliam's letter of credit for £400 had reached Victoria two weeks earlier. The Governor had acknowledged it, assuring the earl that he would afford his son "...every assistance in my power, during his stay in this Colony."⁵⁵ He then caused letters to be written to all posts along Milton's expected route, instructing his subordinates to "...extend to his Lordship the hospitality of the Company's Establishments...rendering him any assistance in your power free of charge."⁵⁶ McKay's instinct served him well, and was warmly appreciated by his guests. Both Milton and Cheadle corresponded with him after their return to England, and Milton sent him a clock in appreciation of his help.⁵⁷

Farewell to O'Beirne

Kamloops was – as it still is – British Columbia's cross-roads. Here, the South Thompson River joins the North Thompson and the joining of the valleys provides access eastward towards the southern passes through the Rockies⁵⁸ and south-east to the Columbia valley and the United States; the enlarged river flows west and then south to join the Fraser, which now flows southward after its circuitous course to the north of the Cariboo Mountains.

O'Beirne now tried their patience once too often by taking it upon himself to pledge Milton's credit at the store, and asking for money to continue his journey. At this, Cheadle exploded; there was a showdown and O'Beirne was compelled to set out alone, pack on back, having the gall to assure them as he went, that he bore them no ill will!

From Kamloops it would have been possible to reach Milton's golden goal in the Cariboo, but he and Cheadle probably preferred some respite from the privations of exploration. At any rate, they decided to make for Fort Victoria and, to show their appreciation to the Assiniboine family, took them along as guests.

McKay accompanied them for part of the journey. Their route followed the Thompson westward to its confluence with the Fraser at Lytton. Beyond Lytton the Fraser runs for many miles through a canyon with rapids which render it unnavigable. Until the previous year there had been no route through the canyon, but a road was now being blasted from the mountainside. The track was narrow and precipitous, but they negotiated it

safely and crossed to the west bank of the river by the new suspension bridge at Spuzzum, before reaching the end of the road at Yale.

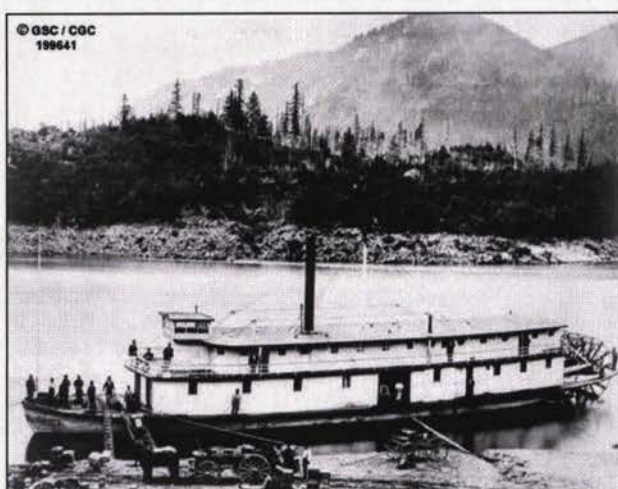


The road through the Fraser Canyon

From there, the steamer *Reliance* operated a ferry service down to New Westminster on the Fraser estuary. The steamer was to sail the following morning, and that evening Milton and Cheadle took the opportunity to entertain Mr and Mrs McKay to dinner at the Colonial Hotel. Also present was McKay's opposite number at Victoria, Mr Finlaison, who - to everyone's relief - brought news of the arrival of Lord Fitzwilliam's letter of credit.

New Westminster

The following morning Milton, Cheadle and the Assiniboines embarked for the river voyage to New Westminster. Cheadle notes that the city (which, in 1863, was the capital of British Columbia)⁵⁹ "...stands on rising ground above the river, amidst the densest forest".⁶⁰



HBC steamer *Reliance* at Yale

Neither the book nor Cheadle's *Journal* mentions Vancouver, which was then quite unknown: its site, on the Burrard Inlet eight miles to the north-west, was marked by nothing more than a farm and a sawmill.⁶¹ The 'densest

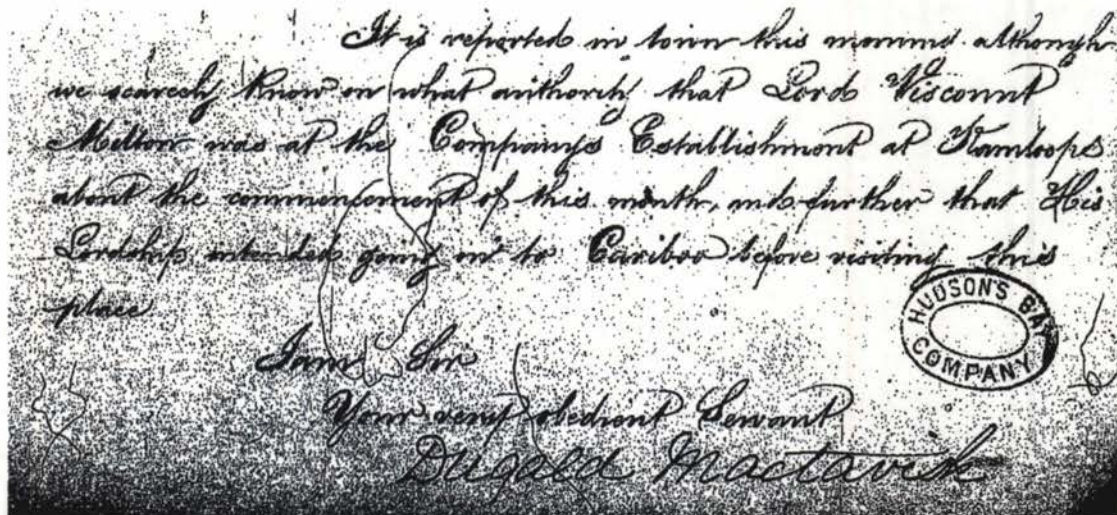
forest' has since given way to a matrix of city streets, and New Westminster is hardly distinguishable from the urban sprawl of its neighbour, Vancouver.



New Westminster in 2007

Exploring Victoria with the Assiniboines

The next day, 19 September, they sailed in the steamer *Enterprise* across the Strait of Georgia to Victoria, at the southern end of Vancouver Island, where Milton was not altogether unexpected. Five days earlier, Dugald Mactavish at Fort Victoria had sent a despatch to Thomas Fraser, the company secretary in London, reporting local gossip to the effect that Lord Milton had reached Fort Kamloops.



Mactavish's letter to London, dated 14 September 1863⁶²

In Victoria Milton and Cheadle spent a week enjoying the luxuries of civilisation and entertaining the Assiniboine family in style. Hiring a buggy, they handed their guests into the carriage, took their places on the box and drove the family round the town; they even took them to the theatre and the ballet. All of this was quite outside the Assiniboines' experience but, according to Cheadle, they enjoyed it immensely. Both hosts and guests quickly acquired celebrity status, and the Assiniboines received many visitors at the cabin provided for them by the Company. Meanwhile – and to ensure that appropriate social distinctions were preserved – Milton and

Cheadle stayed at the St George Hotel and dined with Sir James Douglas, the Governor.⁶³

But none of this high life deflected Milton from his determination to visit the goldfields, and after a week they all returned to New Westminster. The Assiniboines were to winter at Kamloops, before returning to Fort Pitt in the spring by one of the southern passes. During their last days together the Assiniboine confessed to Cheadle that he had fully intended to desert when the party reached Jasper House, despite the undertaking of loyalty which he gave after the defection of Baptiste. All was, of course, forgiven and Milton paid for the family's passage back to Kamloops. And so they parted at New Westminster, the Assiniboines sailing aboard the steamer for Yale.

Quite why Milton was so insistent on visiting the goldfields is difficult to fathom. Avarice is hardly a likely motivation, for he came of one of the wealthiest families in England. Towards the end of the book, Milton deplors the fact that Americans rather than Britons were reaping the rewards of the goldfields and expands on his entirely supportable opinion that the British government should have done more to encourage emigration to British Columbia⁶⁴. Indeed, in 1858 alone no fewer than 30,000 Americans passed through Victoria on their way to the Cariboo,⁶⁵ intent on making their fortunes, and in 1863 they were still coming. Perhaps, then, Milton just wanted to see the opportunities at first hand.

To the Goldfields



The goldfields of the Cariboo

Even so, to begin the 450-mile journey to the Cariboo goldfields in October was not without danger. The journey on horse-back, by stage coach, and – where there was no road – by river steamer and open rowing boat was a hazardous one that took three weeks.

Instead of travelling up through the Fraser canyon again, they set off along Lake Harrison, re-joining the Fraser at Lillooet. At intervals along the rough road beyond this tiny settlement were road houses providing rudimentary refreshment and lodging, and the distance from Lillooet was reflected in the name of each house. Even today, the towns that later grew up around them are known as 70-mile house, 100-mile house, and so on. Often there was no more than a single room in which travellers would eat and sleep as best they might.



100-mile House



A typical road house by day...



... and by night

The gold workings were strung for several miles along Williams Creek, east of Quesnel. The Governor had given Milton an introduction to the Gold Commissioner there, which enabled them to visit the better resourced, deeper and therefore more successful claims. They spent ten days visiting diggings in the neighbouring settlements of Richfield, Barkerville and Camerontown; both of them tried their hands at panning (Milton being especially enthusiastic) and came away with a few small nuggets as mementos.

Snow was already three inches deep, and the return journey was made all the more uncomfortable when their boat became grounded in the shallows of the Fraser, and the passengers were obliged to wade ashore through icy water until the boat could be re-floated. Milton and Cheadle finally reached Victoria on 25 November.

Today the scenic drive from Vancouver to the Cariboo can be accomplished comfortably in two days. Only Barkerville remains as a reminder of gold-mining days, preserved as it was then for the enlightenment of summer visitors.

High Life in Victoria

Milton's return attracted press coverage again: reporting the arrival of *Reliance* at New Westminster with \$47,000 in gold, *The British Colonist* added, "Lord Milton was on board, and is looking well after his tour in Cariboo."⁶⁶

Although it was now time to think of returning to England, Milton and Cheadle found it all too easy to enter again into Victoria's social round. They went to the theatre and to the St Andrew's Day dinner; dined with Governor and Lady Douglas (who, incidentally, was half-aboriginal);⁶⁷ played whist with the magistrate, skittles with the Royal Marines, and generally enjoyed themselves. Sometimes Milton would go off by himself to the music hall or out on the town with Captain Lascelles, who commanded HMS Forward which was in port at the time. Perhaps it was the excitement, but during this period Milton suffered two epileptic fits, one of which was quite severe.



Sir James and Lady Douglas

Later, Milton and Cheadle accepted invitations from Captain Lascelles to join his ship on patrol. From the naval harbour at Esquimalt they sailed up the east coast of Vancouver Island to Nanaimo, and on the return voyage called at San Juan Island to visit the British garrison there. Milton was fascinated to learn that the Americans also maintained a garrison on the island, since the sovereignty of San Juan and thirteen neighbouring islands lying between Vancouver Island and the mainland (and south of the 49th parallel) was in dispute between Britain and the America.⁶⁸

Homeward Bound

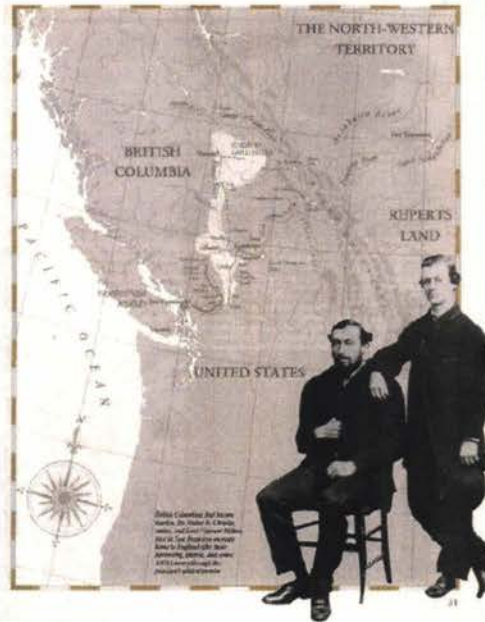
Returning to Victoria a week before Christmas, they regretfully declined the Governor's invitation to remain for the festive season and began the long journey home. On 20 December, they sailed for San Francisco where they spent nearly a month before continuing their voyage to Panama; there they crossed the isthmus by train before sailing across the Gulf of Mexico for New York, where they disembarked on 15 February.

After enjoying a short stay in New York (during which they skated in Central Park) and a visit to Washington, Milton and Cheadle set sail aboard the Cunard ship, *China*. They finally reached Liverpool on 7 March 1864⁶⁹ after a journey of 21 months.

Personal Reflections

Upon their return to England Milton and Cheadle acquired the status of minor celebrities. Apart from their reports to the Royal Geographical Society and the British Association, they gave lectures to a variety of less august

gatherings. Cheadle was also engaged in writing *The North-west Passage by Land* and Milton in editing it.



Cheadle (left) and Milton photographed in San Francisco

Dr Cheadle then returned to his career, continuing his medical studies at Cambridge before going on to become an outstanding physician. At various times he was an examiner in medicine for the Royal College of Physicians and dean of the medical school at St Mary's Hospital; but his eminence was mainly derived from his pioneering work as a paediatrician at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, where he practised for nearly 40 years.⁷⁰ He also remained in touch with Milton, attending him after a hunting accident in 1866.⁷¹

In 1865, following the family tradition, Milton sought election to Parliament, and became Liberal Member for the southern division of the West Riding. As an MP, he used his influence to focus the attention of successive governments on the affairs of British North America. In 1868 he presented a Parliamentary petition pointing out that British naval vessels operating in the eastern Pacific could only be repaired in San Francisco, and that the postal service between London and British Columbia also depended upon the United States. The petitioners wanted both to be brought under British control, by the provision of a graving dock at Esquimalt and a trans-Canada railway.⁷² Milton also raised questions in the House about the Hudson's Bay Company, claiming outrageously - and unsuccessfully - that it had forfeited its charter, as a consequence of its failure to pay a long-forgotten levy imposed in the 17th century.⁷³

Milton even considered the advantages of maritime trade with Asia. He wrote:

Millions of money and hundreds of lives have been lost in the search for the North-west Passage by Sea. Discovered at last,⁷⁴ it has proved useless. The North-west Passage by Land is the real highway to the Pacific.

To support his lobbying in Parliament Milton drew upon an active correspondence with acquaintances in British Columbia and consequently made himself unpopular with ministers in his own party's government. Indeed, he devoted more speeches in the House to Canadian affairs than to those of his constituents. He put down numerous questions about the governance of Canada; they were often passed from one minister to another and rarely answered to Milton's satisfaction. On one occasion he walked out of the chamber, complaining later that a minister "...by not rising in his place, although present in this House," had declined to answer his question.⁷⁵ These ministers in Gladstone's government, which Milton was expected to support, evidently regarded him as rather a nuisance.

Drawing attention to the absence of any sense of unity between the eastern and western colonies, Milton pointed out that British Columbia had more to do with the United States than with Quebec. That was certainly true. Before the Fraser canyon was opened up in the 1860s, the Columbia River provided the only practicable access to the Pacific, not only from the prairies but from British Columbia's interior. This access had been protected since the Oregon Convention of 1818, which provided joint sovereignty with the US over all the territory lying south of 49°N and west of the Columbia River - that is to say, most of the present State of Washington. This irked the Americans, some of whose legislators wanted to remove the anomaly by simply shifting the border west of the Rockies as far north as the southern end of Russia's Alaskan pan-handle.⁷⁶ US/British differences continued to fester until they were resolved after a fashion by the Oregon Treaty of 1846. The treaty denied Britain control of the lower Columbia but helpfully guaranteed free navigation and portage rights to the HBC along that part of the river which lay within the United States.⁷⁷

Having listened to Governor Douglas and others, Milton perceived a risk that a newly united America might exploit Britain's lack of commitment to its North American territories by attempting to annexe British Columbia. Milton's fear was entirely justified and may well have been underestimated by the British Government. After the civil war ended in 1865 a significant body of American opinion favoured the acquisition of British North America in its entirety.⁷⁸ More practically, Americans recognised the importance of linking the east and west coasts: the Union Pacific Railroad Company's line from New York was already snaking its way towards San Francisco, and Milton maintained that the absence of plans for a corresponding line north of the 49th parallel threatened to increase British Columbia's dependence upon - and vulnerability to - the United States.

Moreover, the Oregon Treaty itself contained an ambiguity in relation to the San Juan Islands that provoked a quarrel between Britain and the US almost as acrimonious as that over Oregon.⁷⁹ The state of armed truce on the islands which Milton had observed for himself prompted him, in 1869, to publish a robust and well researched defence of Britain's claim to the San Juan islands.⁸⁰

In setting out his case, he writes:

On a just and equitable solution of the so-called San Juan Water Boundary Question depends the future, not only of British Columbia, but also of the entire British possessions in North America.

Today that sounds like exaggeration, but the statement should be considered in the light of the expressed ambitions of some influential US politicians of the time.



The San Juan Islands, showing the opposing boundary claims of Britain and the US

Milton concludes that, to maintain its power and influence in the Pacific, Great Britain must retain the San Juan archipelago: otherwise, he contends, the United States would control the approach to its only harbour on the Pacific coast (ie Esquimalt, near Victoria) as well as marine traffic between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. On the other hand, British ownership of the islands (according to Milton) would leave America's strategic interests unimpaired, save for the loss of the islands themselves. Put another way, the islands would only be of significant value to United States if that country had wider territorial ambitions against Great Britain.⁸¹

In the event, the San Juan dispute was resolved by arbitration in 1872. The arbitrator, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, finally drew the line through the Haro Strait (instead of through the Rosario Strait, as claimed by Britain) thus giving the majority of the San Juan archipelago to the United States.

Milton's energetic public relations exercise was consistent with his enthusiasm for the development of the newly-emergent Canada, and of British Columbia in particular. As he had already made clear in the book,⁸² he was convinced that more should be done to encourage emigration (from Britain) and settlement of the prairies and of British Columbia. Whilst he had a high regard for the staff of the Hudson's Bay Company, upon whom he and Cheadle had depended for so much, he could see that settlement of these lands would harm the Company's fur trading interests and that, so long as the Company remained in control, the territories' great capacity for wealth generation would remain undeveloped: he also feared that, by comparison with the western United States, the corresponding British lands would become an economic and social backwater.

The Birth of Canada

In the early 19th century British governments of both parties regarded the North American territories as rather a nuisance. Not only were ministers content for the Hudson's Bay Company to administer the lands it had been given in 1670, but in 1821 the government granted the company similar

rights in relation to British Columbia, Vancouver Island and the disputed Oregon Territory. In the east, French and English settlers were continually bickering; there were squabbles between Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec) and between those colonies and the Colonial Office. In the 1840s, whilst Waterloo was well within living memory, it was perhaps not surprising that Peel's administration (of which the Duke of Wellington was a member) should be alarmed by the Governor-General's decision to admit French-speaking representatives to the colonial government. When Prime Minister, Peel himself even considered allowing Upper and Lower Canada to go their own way, so long as Britain retained the maritime colonies of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.⁸³

By the time Milton was in Parliament twenty years later, Palliser's report had improved the government's comprehension of Canadian issues and the earlier sense of desperation had eased, but until the boundary disputes could be settled ministers hesitated to risk having to defend a distant corner of the Empire by military intervention. Of course, Milton was impatient, sometimes overstated his case and was not the only voice being heard on North American affairs; yet he was one of the few parliamentarians with first hand knowledge of the continent.

In 1860 a Select Committee of the House of Commons had recommended a dilution of the Hudson's Bay Company's authority, and two years later Palmerston's administration tried to engineer a surrender of power in exchange for financial compensation to the shareholders. All these currents came together in 1867 in the British North America Act. This sanctioned the Confederation of the eastern colonies which together became the Dominion of Canada.

But the Act also provided for the future admission to the Confederation of the western colonies and of Rupert's Land. It was the beginning of the end for the Hudson's Bay Company's stranglehold on these vast lands. Two years later Lord Granville, Gladstone's shrewd Colonial Secretary, secured the Company's grudging agreement to sell its lands to the fledgling Canadian government for \$1,460,000, and guaranteed a loan for the sterling equivalent of £300,000. The Company was allowed to retain 45,000 acres adjacent to its 120 trading posts, but its fiat over half a nation came to an end.⁸⁴

In 1866 British Columbia and Vancouver Island were united as a single colony, though its political future remained precarious. Despite the HBC's navigation rights on the Columbia River, the ceding of the Oregon Territory south of the 49th parallel to the US had added urgency to the need to secure an alternative route to the coast within British North America. Yet it was 1871 before the Canadian government felt strong enough to promise a trans-continental railway in exchange for British Columbia's accession to the Confederation, and another fourteen years before the railway became a reality: the last spike in the Canadian Pacific Railway was hammered home in 1885⁸⁵ on the southern route over the Kicking Horse Pass. Like Milton, the CPR's chief engineer, Sandford Fleming favoured the route through the Yellowhead Pass and the valley of the North Thompson.⁸⁶ The politicians, on the other hand, feared that American railroad companies – already ahead in the race for the Pacific – would build lines into southern Canada unless the

CPR did so first. A transcontinental line following in Milton's footsteps through the Yellowhead Pass was eventually opened in 1915.⁸⁷

Epilogue

In 1867 - between June and August - Milton proposed to and married Laura Beauclerk, a niece of the Duke of St Albans; he was 28, she 18. He gave her a wedding ring made from gold brought back from the Cariboo. This time - possibly because neither of her parents was living - his father failed to prevent the marriage.⁸⁸



Lord and Lady Milton

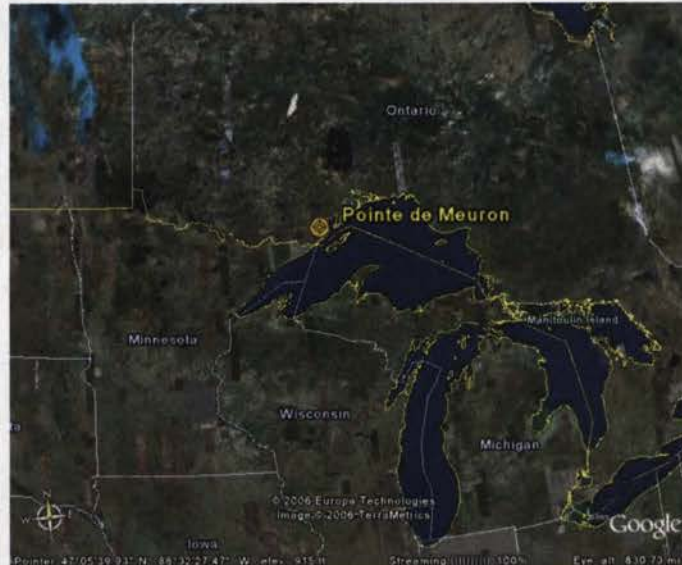
But five years later everything changed: Milton suddenly resigned his seat in Parliament and emigrated with his pregnant wife and their two young daughters to North America. The primary reason seems to have been a deterioration in his health. This is suggested by contemporary newspaper reports, and supported by a collection of medical prescriptions amongst his papers. The prescriptions, made up by London pharmacists between 1867 and 1870, included opium, the sedative chloral hydrate, and potassium bromide and strychnine, which were used at the time as anticonvulsants.⁸⁹ We also know that Laura was not in robust health.⁹⁰

These may have been reasons enough to give up Parliament but it is surprising, to say the least, that Milton and his wife should choose to leave a family home capable of providing creature comforts beyond desire, and where one would have expected every possible support to have been provided. It is therefore difficult to avoid the conclusion that family relationships were less than happy; perhaps Milton even felt that he had become a burden. About the time he decided to return to North America he wrote to his parents:

*Dear Father and Mother will you forgive me for all the pain and trouble I have caused you. When you know what I have suffered I know you will. Pray for me dear Father and Mother. Your loving and repentant son.*⁹¹

Milton and Laura were bound for the Allegheny Mountains in Virginia, possibly at the suggestion of Laura's elder brother, Herbert Beauclerk, who

lived in the region. But they wanted their child to be born on British soil and therefore arranged to lease a farmhouse from the chief factor at Fort William, a Hudson's Bay Company post in Ontario. It was a ramshackle property situated on a bend in the Kaministiquia River known as Pointe de Meuron⁹². Anything less like the palatial splendour of Wentworth Woodhouse is hard to imagine. Yet here, on 25 July 1872 Milton's son and heir was born.



Pointe de Meuron: on the Kaministiquia River about seven miles upstream from its entry into Lake Superior

Today Pointe de Meuron is a suburb of Thunder Bay, Ontario, on the north-west shore of Lake Superior, and the site is occupied by Fort William Historic Park, a re-creation of the original fur-trading post.

Although Milton and Laura were determined to live in America, the birth of an heir to the Fitzwilliam title and estates imposed a need for reconsideration. Whether or not the Earl and Countess insisted - and despite the discomfort of transatlantic travel - Milton and his family returned temporarily to Wentworth in November, and there William Charles de Meuron Fitzwilliam was baptised.



Milton Hall, Covington, Virginia

Early the following year they crossed the Atlantic yet again - this time to Virginia; and there, at last, in the town of Covington they built a family

house for themselves. It was built in the Victorian Gothic style and called Milton Hall.

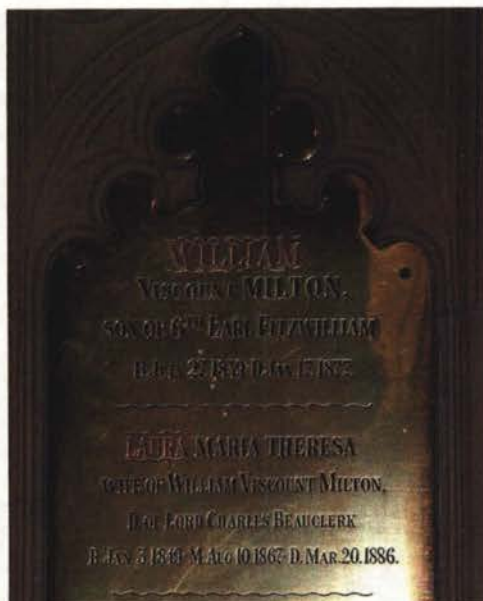
Tragically, they had too little time to enjoy it. Four years later, on 17 January 1877 at the Villa Humboldt in the Bois Guillaume at Rouen and with Laura at his bedside,⁹³ Milton died. He was 37.

One can only speculate about the reason for his being in Rouen; possibly he was on his way to or from one of the fashionable European spas, in the hope of improving his health, but there might equally well be a quite different explanation. As his death occurred abroad the certificate omits the cause of death, but the report in *The Times* two days later speaks of his having suffered a long illness. The death certificate does, however, record as informant the name of Thomas Miller MRCS. Five years earlier Dr Miller had attended Laura at the birth of their son at Pointe de Meuron; moreover, he had remained in daily attendance upon both Lord and Lady Milton during the intervening years.⁹⁴

Dr Miller accompanied Milton's body to Wentworth, where it was interred in the family vault. Dr Cheadle was also among the mourners.

The effect upon Laura can only be imagined. She returned to Wentworth with the children but was not happy there and died nine years later in Torquay, also aged 37. Milton Hall, which Laura left to her sisters, is no longer owned by the family.

Milton died before he could inherit the earldom but, upon Lord Fitzwilliam's death in 1902, the boy who had been born on the banks of the Kaministiquia River in a remote corner of Ontario became the 7th Earl Fitzwilliam.



Memorial to Lord and Lady Milton
in Holy Trinity Church, Wentworth



William Charles de Meuron
Fitzwilliam

Most of *The North-west Passage by Land* was evidently written by Cheadle but Milton certainly criticised the proofs⁹⁵ and probably wrote several of the later, political chapters. Their joint report to the Royal Geographical

Society,⁹⁶ on the other hand, seems to have been largely Milton's work but, as a scientific paper, it attracted stricter scrutiny. It was moderated by the arctic explorer, Sir George Back, who insisted that the route across the prairies was so well known that that section of the report should be removed, together with all references to O'Beirne.⁹⁷

Some commentators have described Milton and Cheadle as tourists or "self-professed pleasure-seekers".⁹⁸ Indeed, they admitted as much during the course of their travels, but in this I think they underestimated the serious worth of the expedition. Certainly, money and position enabled them to make the journey, and it is questionable whether it would have been made if Lord Fitzwilliam had not insisted on a change of scene for his son. Nevertheless, Milton had - or developed - a genuine interest in the North American colonies, which he pursued long after his return. As for Cheadle, there can be little doubt that the expedition would have failed but for his qualities of leadership, not to mention his medical skill.

Their expedition contrasts starkly with that of the Earl of Southesk who four years earlier hunted in the eastern Rockies with a large retinue, including his gamekeeper, and the luxury of his personal India-rubber bath!⁹⁹ Milton and Cheadle, on the other hand, had few servants; fended for themselves; penetrated far deeper into unexplored territory, and pioneered a commercial route to the Pacific by way of the North Thompson valley.¹⁰⁰ Milton's health and temperament repeatedly threatened their survival. Yet he often exhibited a perverse determination to prove himself.

The North-west Passage by Land ran to nine editions, firing imaginations on both sides of the Atlantic and entering Canadian folk-lore. More importantly, it prepared opinion in both Britain and Canada for the ending of the Hudson's Bay Company rule and for the inclusion of the West in the new Confederation¹⁰¹.

2 The Limes
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5 December 2007

Footnotes

- ¹ The words come from Psalm 72, verse 8: "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth" (NRSV).
- ² From the Royal Charter of incorporation of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670.
- ³ Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments (WWM) /T/1-11.
- ⁴ *Black Diamonds* by Catherine Bailey pp. 26-28.
- ⁵ *Way Out West* by Michael Shaw Bond pp. 23-24.
- ⁶ WWM/T/51
- ⁷ Correspondence in a private collection cited in *Black Diamonds* p. 37.
- ⁸ *An Expedition across the Rocky Mountains into British Columbia, by the Yellow Head or Leather Pass* (1864) p. 1; this paper by Milton and Cheadle was read to the British Association (on 17 September 1864) and to the Royal Geographical Society (on 28 December 1864) (RGS Archives).
- ⁹ Dictionary of Canadian Biography.
- ¹⁰ The Overlanders travelled down the North Thompson to Kamloops the previous year, but they intended either to prospect for gold or to settle in British Columbia.
- ¹¹ *The North-west Passage by Land* (1865) pp. 6-7.
- ¹² Fur traders and Company servants engaged in transporting furs and supplies.
- ¹³ John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto) was an Italian navigator sailing aboard the *Matthew*. He sighted land on 24 June 1497, though it is uncertain whether it was Newfoundland or Cape Breton Island.
- ¹⁴ The modern usage is "Hudson Bay", but the possessive is retained in the Company's name.
- ¹⁵ La Ronde had accompanied Dr John Rae on his surveying expedition to the north coast in 1854, when Rae discovered the horrific fate of Sir John Franklin's 1845 expedition in search of the North-west Passage. All 139 men had perished and Rae discovered from Eskimos that some had eventually resorted to cannibalism (*Empire of the Bay* by Peter C Newman (1989) pp. 145-147).
- ¹⁶ *The North-west Passage by Land* p. 63, and Cheadle's *Journal of a Trip across Canada* (1931) p. 63.
- ¹⁷ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 31.
- ¹⁸ The location is described in *Way Out West* by Michel Shaw Bond (2001) p. 108.
- ¹⁹ *The North-west Passage by Land* pp. 77-78.
- ²⁰ *My Hunt of the Silver Fox* by W B Cheadle (June, 1867) (British Columbia Archives NWp.639.C914)
- ²¹ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 89.
- ²² *Ocean to Ocean* by the Revd George M Grant (1873) p. 157.
- ²³ *The North-west Passage by Land* p. 177.
- ²⁴ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 135.
- ²⁵ Assistant Keeper, Royal Pharmaceutical Society Museum, 21 July 2006.
- ²⁶ Both *The North-west Passage by Land* and Cheadle's *Journal of Trip across Canada* refer to St Albans; however, this appears to be incorrect. The settlement was named by Bishop Taché when he authorised the founding priest, Father Albert Lacombe, to call the mission after St Albert, "in honour of your patron saint". (www.umanitoba/colleges...pdf)
- ²⁷ Milton's respect for Father Lacombe amounted to a considerable compliment, for not only had he been brought up in the Church of England but, before her marriage, his mother had been a Presbyterian from the Church of Scotland.
- ²⁸ The mixed blood offspring of mainly French, but also English and Scottish fur traders.
- ²⁹ *Chronicles of the Grey Nuns* (Archives des Soeurs de la Charité de Montréal).
- ³⁰ *A Hard Road to Travel* by Peter J Murphy and others. p. 49.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 51-55.
- ³² *Ibid.* p. 69.

³³ *Description of and Guide to Jasper Park* by M P Bridgland and R Douglas (1917) p. 15, cited in *A Hard Road to Travel* p. 116.

³⁴ *A Hard Road to Travel* p. 31. The name New Caledonia was given to British territory west of the Rocky Mountains when the Hudson's Bay Company began to establish trading posts there, before the creation of the colony of British Columbia. Its geographical extent does not seem to have been formally defined, except insofar as it was the territory served by HBC posts. These (eg Fort George and Fort St John) were generally located in what became central BC.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 111.

³⁶ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 143.

³⁷ The earlier route from Edmonton to Jasper House entailed a long detour north to Fort Assiniboine on the Athabasca River, before paddling upstream against strong currents. The more direct route, due west from Edmonton was pioneered in 1858 by Henry Mobberly, chief trader at Jasper House (*A Hard Road to Travel*, p. 99).

³⁸ *The North-west Passage by Land* p. 198.

³⁹ *A Hard Road to Travel* p. 216.

⁴⁰ Jasper Hawes ran the original post at the northern end of Brulé Lake from 1814 to 1817. It was later moved twice, being finally established in 1829 about 15 miles up-river at the northern end of Jasper Lake. Trade was intermittent and the post was finally abandoned by Henry Mobberly in 1861 (*A Hard Road to Travel*, pp. 66 and 100).

⁴¹ *How we crossed the Rocky Mountains* by Viscount Milton and Dr W B Cheadle, from *The Quiver* magazine, 10 December 1864, p. 209.

⁴² Referred to in *The North-west Passage by Land* as the Maligne River (a tributary flowing from the east) but more likely to have been The Snaring River on the west.

⁴³ The raft was probably launched from a level piece of ground some 200 yards upstream from Garonne Creek; the creek joins the Athabasca from a defile, at the head of which stands Mount Colin. The strong current would have landed them on a shelf of land on the western bank, two or three hundred yards downstream. This site lies about half a mile south of Jasper airfield.

⁴⁴ The height of Mount Fitzwilliam is 9,482 feet, and Bingley Peak (the highest peak in the range) 8,251. Cheadle was probably misled by the relative perspective. It is likely that they were camping immediately below Bingley Peak, whereas the top of Mount Fitzwilliam was over three miles away.

⁴⁵ *Yellowhead Mileposts* by Richard and Rochelle Wright (1974).

⁴⁶ *The North-west Passage by Land*, p. 266.

⁴⁷ A tributary of the Columbia River.

⁴⁸ Lady Albreda Elizabeth Wentworth-Fitzwilliam (1828 – 1891); daughter of the 5th Earl and thus sister to Milton's father. The name has been in the family since the 12th century.

⁴⁹ *How we crossed the Rocky Mountains*, p. 209.

⁵⁰ "If it had fallen off we should have found it lying near, for an animal which had dared to abstract that would have returned to attack the body. It could not have been removed by violence, as the undisturbed position of the body bore witness." *The North-west Passage by Land*, p 297.

⁵¹ The discovery was made near Goose Creek, on the North Thompson about three miles south of Blue River. (*Ocean to Ocean*, p. 275).

⁵² *North River* by Muriel Poulton Dunford (2000) p. 55-56.

⁵³ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 212.

⁵⁴ *The British Columbian* (New Westminster) 19 September 1863 (British Columbia Archives).

⁵⁵ Letter dated 14 August from Governor Douglas to Lord Fitzwilliam (WWM/T/2).

⁵⁶ Letters dated 1 and 4 September 1863 from Dugald Mactavish at Fort Victoria (HBC Archives).

⁵⁷ British Columbia Archives (MS 1917/21 and MS 1917/7).

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- ⁵⁸ Amongst the more southerly passes are the Kicking Horse Pass and the Vermillion Pass, both of which were prospected by James Hector of the Palliser Expedition c.1858.
- ⁵⁹ Vancouver's Island, as it was called, was a separate colony whose capital was Victoria. The two colonies were amalgamated in 1866 but Victoria did not become the capital of the united colony until 1871.
- ⁶⁰ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 234.
- ⁶¹ *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver* by Chuck Davis (2007).
- ⁶² HBC Archives.
- ⁶³ James Douglas, in charge of the Company's business west of the Rockies, was appointed Governor of Vancouver Island in 1851 and Governor, also, of British Columbia in 1858. He was knighted in 1863.
- ⁶⁴ *The North-west Passage by Land* p. 393.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 351.
- ⁶⁶ *The British Colonist* 26 November 1863 (British Columbia Archives).
- ⁶⁷ It was not unusual for a Company man, whilst working in the fur country, to live with an Indian woman as his "country wife". The future Sir James and Lady Douglas met when she was 16 and lived together after this fashion for thirteen years before they were legally married. (*Empire of the Bay* p. 161).
- ⁶⁸ Cheadle's *Journal* p. 269.
- ⁶⁹ The date given in *The North-west passage by Land* is 5 March, but I have taken the date of the relevant entry in Cheadle's *Journal* p. 306.
- ⁷⁰ Dictionary of National Biography.
- ⁷¹ Letter from W B Cheadle to Sir George Back dated 31 March 1866 (RGS Archives); *The Times* 31 March 1866.
- ⁷² WWM/T/60.
- ⁷³ WWM/T/65.
- ⁷⁴ Captain (later, Sir) Robert McClure discovered the North-west Passage by approaching from the Bering Strait. In 1850 he began an exploration of Prince of Wales Strait (between Banks Island and Victoria Island) and reached Melville Sound, where his ship became trapped in the ice. Exploring east by sledge, he established the existence of a sea channel by eventually linking up with Sir Edward Belcher's expedition approaching from the east through the Barrow Strait. But although the channel – now known in its entirety as the Parry Channel – was discovered, ice prevented the passage of McClure's ship, which he abandoned to return to England with Belcher in 1854 (*The Discovery of the North-west Passage by Captain R McClure* 1857). The first navigation of the North-west Passage was made by Roald Amundsen between 1903 and 1906.
- ⁷⁵ WWM/T/65.
- ⁷⁶ In 1844 President Polk was elected on the basis of the catchy slogan, "54° 40' or fight". That latitude was chosen because, until Alaska was sold to the US in 1867, Russia claimed the contiguous British territory further north.
- ⁷⁷ *A Hard Road to Travel* pp. 84-85.
- ⁷⁸ *The San Juan Water Boundary Question* by J O McCabe (1964) p. 76.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 1.
- ⁸⁰ *A History of the San Juan Water Boundary Question as affecting the Division of Territory Between Great Britain and the United States* (Viscount Milton 1869). See also WWM/T/61.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 444-5.
- ⁸² *The North-west passage by Land* pp. 385 et seq.
- ⁸³ *Robert Peel* by Douglas Hurd (2007) pp. 274-275.
- ⁸⁴ *Empire of the Bay* by Peter C Newman (1989) pp. 164-169.
- ⁸⁵ The ceremony was performed on 7 November 1885 by Sir Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona) a director of the CPR and a former Resident Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

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- ⁸⁶ *Lord Strathcona, a biography of D A Smith*, (Donna McDonald 1996) p. 303.
- ⁸⁷ The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway began operating a freight service on its line from Edmonton to Prince Rupert in August 1914, but the company was forced into bankruptcy in 1919. Its rival, the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway completed its line through the Yellowhead Pass and the North Thompson valley to Vancouver in December 1915.
- ⁸⁸ *Black Diamonds* p. 45.
- ⁸⁹ WWM/T/52.
- ⁹⁰ *Black Diamonds* pp. 46-47.
- ⁹¹ Private collection, cited in *Black Diamonds*, p. 30.
- ⁹² The name comes from the Regiment de Meuron, a well-organised band of Swiss mercenaries who fought with the British Army in North America between 1795 and 1816. It took its name from its first commander, the Comte de Meuron who was born in Neuchatel in 1738.
- ⁹³ Laura telegraphed Wentworth on 14 January 1877 to say that Milton was desperately ill (*Black Diamonds* p. 56).
- ⁹⁴ WWM uncatalogued material, Box 236, bundle 10 (9b). Dr Miller's name is sometimes given as Millar, but the signature on his letter is unmistakable.
- ⁹⁵ There is an incomplete proof copy (WWM/T/63) in which Milton challenges Cheadle's recollection of certain facts.
- ⁹⁶ *An Expedition across the Rocky Mountains into British Columbia, by the Yellow Head or Leather Pass*, 1864 (RGS Archives).
- ⁹⁷ Opinion by Vice-Admiral Sir George Back dated 14 December 1864 (RGS Archives JMS/4/62).
- ⁹⁸ In her book *North River*, (p. 59) Muriel Poulton Dunford describes Cheadle as "...a well-paid lackey dancing attendance on a spoiled young blueblood". Additionally, A G Doughty and Gustave Lanctot in their editorial introduction to Cheadle's *Journal of Trip across Canada*, (p. 7) contend that he made the traverse from the Atlantic to the Pacific "for pleasure".
- ⁹⁹ *A Hard Road to Travel*, pp. 109-110.
- ¹⁰⁰ The Overlanders did not use the North Thompson to reach the coast; they either remained around Kamloops or made for the goldfields.
- ¹⁰¹ Canadian Dictionary of National Biography.

Acknowledgements

I should like to record my appreciation of the help I have received whilst researching this paper. The following are among the sources I have consulted:

- The Royal Geographical Society, London., for access to:
 - Paper by Milton and Cheadle: *An Expedition across the Rocky Mountains into British Columbia, by the Yellow Head or Leather Pass*, 1864.
 - Opinion of Sir George Back dated 14 December 1864.
 - Letter from Dr W B Cheadle to Sir George Back dated 31 March 1866.
 - Map of North America (reproduced in the appendix)
- The Director of Culture, Sheffield City Council for access to the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments. I am especially grateful to Judith Phillips, Archivist, for her practical help, and also to Anthony Barber-Lomax, Agent to Fitzwilliam (Wentworth) Estates for permission to examine uncatalogued papers. [As required, the following statement is added: The Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments have been accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government and allocated to Sheffield City Council.]
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- Other sources:
 - The Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company at the National Archives, Kew.
 - The British Library, London.
 - Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton.
 - British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

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Hudson's Bay Company for the following pictures from *Empire of the Bay* (1989):

- The Hudson's Bay Company charter (p 13)
- Hudson's Bay Company store (p 14)
- Drying meat to make pemmican (p 14)
- A Red River cart (p 15)
- York Boats on the Saskatchewan River (p 25)
- Sir James and Lady Douglas (p 47)

The National Geographic Society for the following pictures from *The National Geographic Traveler: Canada* (1999):

- General Wolfe attacking Quebec in 1759 (p 12)
- Indian lodges on Lake Huron (p 16)
- A buffalo hunt (Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature) (p 17)
- A Blackfoot Chief (p 18)

Google Earth for the following maps:

- The Red River, Minnesota/North Dakota (p 10)
- Lake Morin, Saskatchewan (p 19)
- Tête Jaune Cache (p 34)
- Kamloops, British Columbia (p 41)
- New Westminster, British Columbia (p 44)
- The San Juan Islands (p 50)
- Pointe de Meuron, Ontario (p 53)
- Western Alberta and British Columbia (appendix)

Two people, especially, contributed to the latter-day expedition which my wife and I made to western Canada. Peter Murphy, Professor Emeritus at the University of Alberta, and Tom Peterson, a consummate historian in his field, allowed me to draw upon their considerable knowledge of the terrain and people of the Athabasca valley and the Yellowhead Pass, and the history of travel through that region. Amongst other things, they enabled me to identify with surprising accuracy the route taken by Milton and Cheadle through the Rocky Mountains. I am very grateful to them both for the time and trouble they devoted to our visit, not to mention the pleasure of their company.

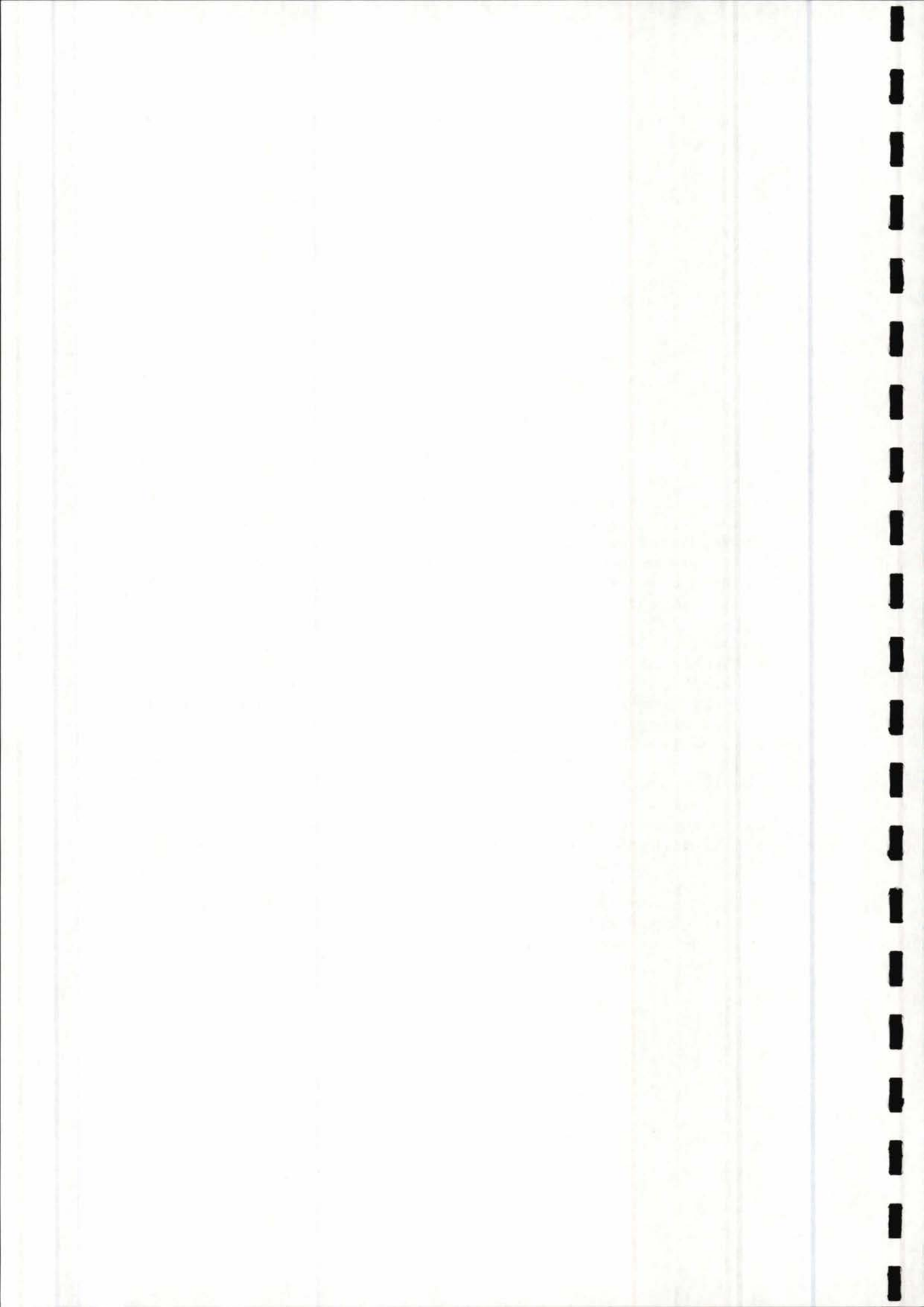
I am indebted to Michael Payne, City Archivist at Edmonton, Alberta for his help and advice, and for his introduction to Tim Marriott, Head of Interpretive Services at Fort Edmonton Park. Tim and his colleague, Tom Long, gave us an authoritative impression of Fort Edmonton, as it would have been at about the time of Milton's expedition; we thank them most warmly for their hospitality and for bringing this formative era in Canada's history so vividly to life for us.

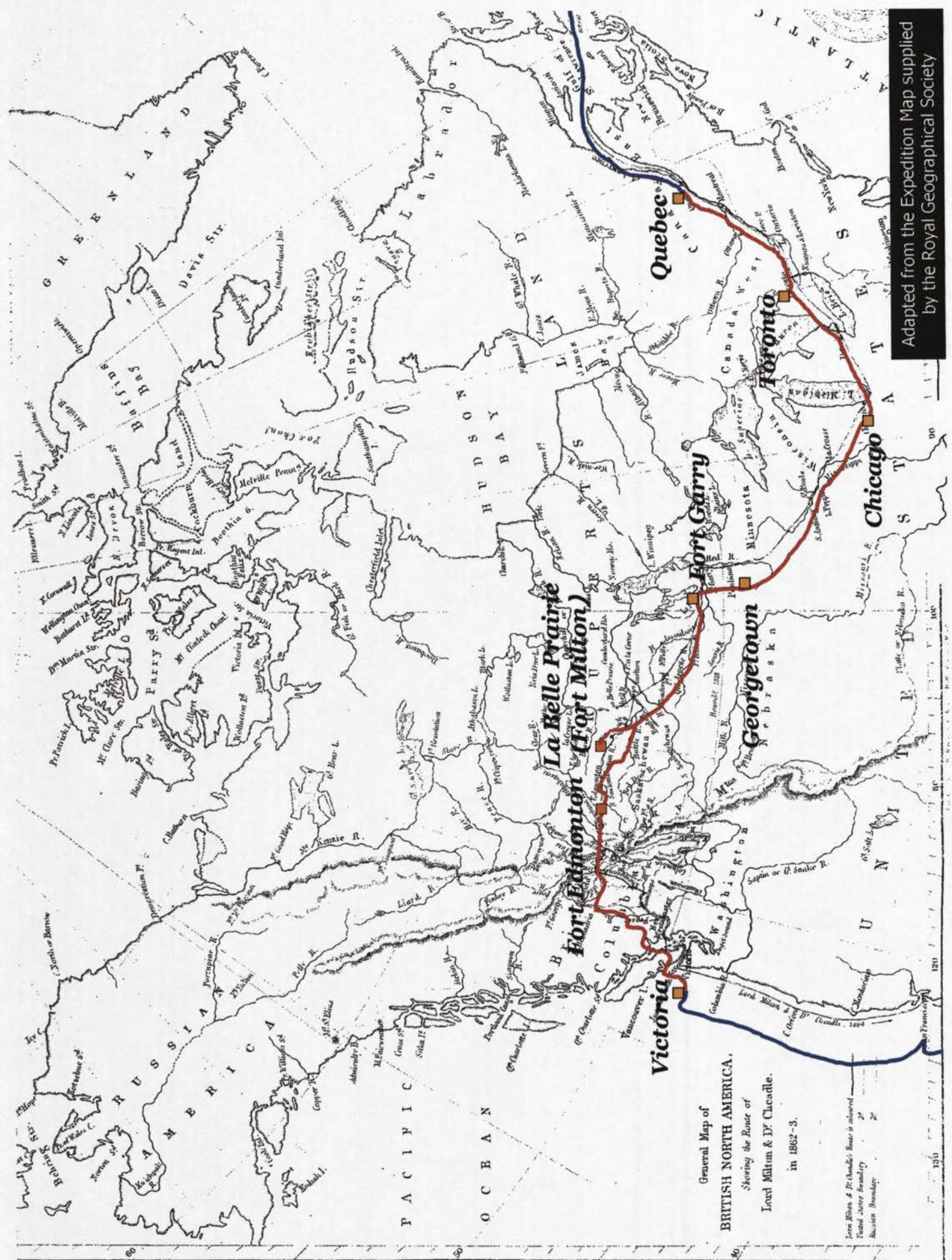
My thanks go also to Sir Philip Naylor-Leyland who kindly reviewed my draft.

Milton's great-great-grandson, Michael Shaw Bond whose perceptive book *Way Out West* records his own, more comprehensive journey along Milton's trail, was generous enough give me the benefit of his special insight into the expedition and its background.

And finally, I count myself fortunate to have been able to meet Milton's grand-daughter, Mrs Crystal Wade, with whom I enjoyed a sunny afternoon's conversation at Black Creek on the coast of Vancouver Island, discussing her grandfather's exploits.

B W L





General Map of
BRITISH NORTH AMERICA,
 Showing the Route of
 Lord Milton & Dr. Clucade.
 in 1862-3.

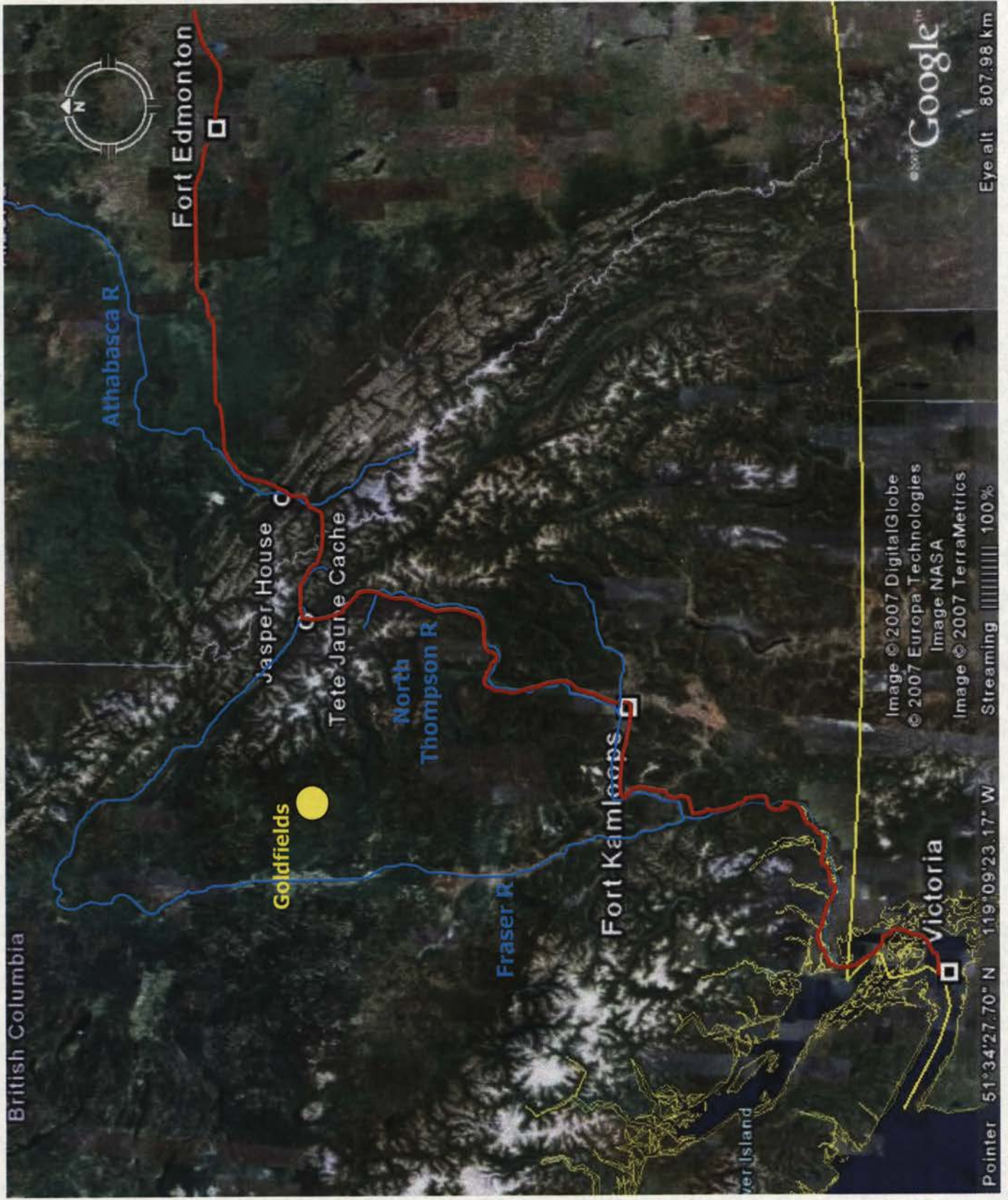
From Wilson & De Couville's *Route in 1862-3*
 Trans. Amer. Geogr. Soc. 2^d Ser.
 Boston: Bowdler.

Adapted from the Expedition Map supplied
 by the Royal Geographical Society

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The trail through the Rockies

