

“We selected a beautiful point on the south side about 3/4ths of a mile above the portage where there is abundance of fine Timber and the situation eligible in every point of view. An excellent farm can be made at this place where as much grain and potatoes may

be raised as would feed all the natives of the Columbia and a sufficient number of Cattle and Hogs to supply his Majesty's Navy with Beef and Pork.” This quote taken from George Simpson's journal of April 14, 1825, marked the beginning of a permanent residence for the Hudson's Bay Company in this area. He marked off a 150 foot square commanding a broad view of the river just north of the Kettle Falls and established Fort Colville*, named after Andrew Colville, a director of the Company. The site was donated by the Chief of the local Indian tribe under a verbal treaty which also prevented Company interference with their fisheries at the falls.

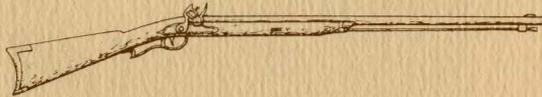
It soon became the largest post between the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains serving as district headquarters for personnel and collection point for furs. Fort Colville was a major link in the communications line for the Hudson's Bay Company from the east to the west coast. It also served as the main source for supplies throughout the district which encompassed the entire Columbia River watershed above the present Grand Coulee Dam.



The Store being the center for business was built first, followed by a dwelling house and other minor buildings. A staff of a dozen or so loyal British and French-Canadian citizens were employed along with up to 50 Indians, depending on the season.

In reports by John Work, Chief Trader for the post in 1830, he notes, “. . . the establishment was enclosed with stockade. . .”, and on a stream a short distance from the fort a water powered grist mill was built for grinding flour. Production of food was so

important that journals often read like those of a large farm or ranch, its produce being shipped as far away as Alaska and Hawaii at times. The Fort Colville District reached its peak in the 1830's and 40's under the management of Archibald McDonald. There were nearly 340 acres of cultivated land, and major buildings included the Chief Trader's house adjacent to the main store, the flour mill, a bakery, blacksmith and carpentry shops, barns, quarters for the employees, and various other buildings. Possibly the greatest impact this post had on the Indians of the area was the creation of a market for their goods and services thus allowing them to buy European products.



In 1846 the U.S. boundary line was set at the 49th parallel. Due to increasing tensions with the Indians in 1859, Fort Colville, a U.S. Army garrison, was built a dozen miles to the east. Difficulties with the transportation of trade supplies for the British post and curtailment of their ammunition sales to the tribes by the U.S. government set the stage for the collapse of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Pacific Northwest. The Company was closing all its posts, even those in British Columbia to the north but the foreign corporation refused to leave the U.S. until compensated for their loss. This finally came about in 1871.

Angus McDonald, nephew of Archibald, managed the post in its final days with the Company. The McDonald family continued to reside there as ranchers until 1907. Fire destroyed most of the structures in July of 1910. As the water of Lake Roosevelt filled behind Grand Coulee Dam in the early 1940's submerging the remaining foundations, Fort Colville of the Hudson's Bay Company became another chapter in the history of the West.

*The Indian tribes by the same name prefer the spelling Colville.



This photograph of Fort Colville of the Hudson's Bay Company shows the main post complex and its surrounding farmlands. Courtesy Royal Engineers Corps Library.



COULEE DAM NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
WASHINGTON
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

