

**HOUSING THE HOMEGUARD AT MOOSE FACTORY:  
1730-1982**

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**ABSTRACT/RESUME**

Almost as soon as Moose Factory was built in 1730 some employees of the Hudson's Bay Company began to live with native women of the area. By the late 18th century the practice was acknowledged, and by 1830 the Company clearly allowed men to erect private dwellings outside the post itself. In the early 20th century many of these houses were owned by the Hudson's Bay Company and rented to employees. This paper traces the development of the homeguard housing site at one fur trade post over some 250 years.

Dès l'établissement du poste de Moose Factory en 1730, certains employés de la Compagnie de la baie d'Hudson ont commencé à vivre avec des femmes autochtones de la région. Avant la fin du 18e siècle, cette pratique fut reconnue par la Compagnie, qui avant 1830 permettait déjà à ses employés d'ériger des habitations privées à l'extérieur du poste même. Au début du 20e siècle, la Compagnie possédait un grand nombre de ces habitations et les louait à ses employés. Dans cette étude, l'auteur trace le développement de ces pratiques à un poste particulier, au cours d'une période d'environ 250 ans.

Housing is a basic aspect of lifestyle. Although research has been done on the distinct Metis way of life that became identified with these people of the fur trade, no one has looked at Metis housing as an expression of their way of life. This paper isolates Moose Factory, a fur trade community on the coast of James Bay and investigates the housing of the homeguard group who developed into the Metis community.

The task was not easy. Almost all of the information on the housing of Hudson's Bay Company employees beneath the level of officer is indirect or circumstantial. Nevertheless knowledge of the evolution of their living conditions is central to developing a social history of the Metis people. Similarly, knowledge of the evolution of housing in one important fur trade community can give clues about the evolution of housing in other such communities. This, then, is a "longitudinal microcosmic" study of one element of Metis lifestyle.

From time immemorial groups of Cree Indians from the interior woodland regions travelled down the lowland rivers to the coast of James Bay every spring. They lived simply with few material goods. A wigwam suited the housing needs of their nomadic lifestyle. They spent the goose hunting seasons near the shores of James Bay, on the flight path of the birds. Summers were spent along the rivers at the best fishing spots. In winter they moved into the woodlands in search of food, fuel, and protection from the elements. Fur bearing animals provided both food and clothing for the harsh winter months. The environment was fickle. Drought, floods, excessive cold or heat, and disease often disrupted the normal food supplies, bringing starving conditions to the people who relied on them. It was, however, a way of life that lasted for many thousands of years.

Granted a charter from the British parliament in 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company was given a monopolistic right to trade in furs in the lands draining into Hudson and James Bay, an area it named Rupert's Land. By a single stroke of the pen many thousands of miles distant, a way of life was altered permanently by forces in many ways beyond the control of the native inhabitants of these fur-rich lands.

The first fur trading post at Moose Factory at the mouth of the Moose River was built in 1673. It grew in importance until its capture by the French in 1686, yet it was not apparently used thereafter even though it was returned to British ownership by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

A new post was erected at Moose in 1750. It was built at least in part because the Indians requested a post nearer to their hunting grounds than Albany, about 100 miles north of Moose at the mouth of the Albany River. Immediately afterwards a tradition was established at Moose that was in effect at older posts and would continue at this post for two centuries. A few Indians began to hunt geese for the use of the post. They stayed in the vicinity for over a month bringing in their excess catch. Over the years, Indians began to form semi-permanent attachments to the fur trade post, leaving their sick and elderly while they went off fishing in summer and hunting and trapping in winter. These Indians became known as the home or homeguard Indians.

Many of the Moose homeguard had previously been attached to Albany and were skilled goose hunters and deer hunters. Their contribution to the fur trade

post was primarily to provide country provisions. By remaining in the vicinity of the post instead of following their previous migratory patterns, these natives exposed themselves to periodic food shortages. During these times, usually in late winter, the homeguard were forced to turn to the fur trade post to sustain them. Clearly, the home-guard maintained almost constant touch with the post and quite understandably developed both business and social relationships with the fur traders who occupied it.

Social exchange between the natives and traders was officially forbidden, but the regulation could never be enforced effectively. In particular, the officers in charge of the post were able to disregard it. William Bevan, in charge of Moose Fort between 1732 and 1737, kept an Indian woman as his companion. Since this practice was officially forbidden, very little was recorded about the woman. Presumably she lived in the factor's apartment. It is also likely that they had children who shared the same apartment.

The common workers were not usually able to have such normal domestic ties. If they formed attachments to local women, their relationships had to be clandestine, with perhaps the woman living near the post in a wigwam. Such discriminatory practices may well have contributed to the general discontent of the men who worked for Bevan, for his tenure was marked by several instances of labour unrest.

When the entire fort burned down in 1735, a brief account of the fire appeared in the post's official journal. Included in the report was the statement "We had 1 Indian girl burned in the Factory that we see no more of her".<sup>1</sup> What the girl was doing in the factory, how old she was, or whether there were other Indians inside the factory at the time of the fire who were rescued are not revealed in the post journal. Another source, however, indicates that twelve Indians were among those celebrating the holiday at the time of the fire (Davies, 19:270). Presumably they were inside the palisade.

In the earliest years the men's lives were closely regulated and left little time for the establishment of families. In the early 1740's, a new Factor, James Duffield, who instituted a new and stricter regime than his predecessor, rang the morning bell at 8 am.. allowed his men half an hour for breakfast and then brought them to work until noon. when he gave them two hours to make and eat their dinner. Afterwards they worked until 6 p.m. Before "lights and pipes" were extinguished at 8 p.m. the men were to cook their supper and perform any domestic chores they needed to do. At curfew time the gate was locked and was only re-opened in the morning.<sup>2</sup> General cleaning of men's rooms in the men's area of the factory was probably done by an employee rather than by the individuals themselves.

At least one servant is known to have established a family from among the homeguard during this time. A few clues about Augustin Frost's domestic relationship with the homeguard still exist. Frost, a carpenter, was reputed to be looking after, and perhaps even "heading" at least one native family. This entry in the post journal for 16 May, 1742, gives an inkling of his domestic ties with the homeguard:

Sent the master of the sloop and 3 seamen in a boat to look for

the great buoy which drove away last fall. We having intelligence from old Muccatoon, father of the rabbit skin guard, that he had seen it and wanted his son-in-law Augustin Frost to go by land and make a smoke for the boat as he did in the fall and so take another weeks pleasure with his family who are a common nuisance to the factory. The old man had 2 pounds of powder to hunt this spring for which I have received but 7 geese & now tells me the geese are all gone which is about the satisfaction I am like to have from a strong suspicion that the old man and Frost could have brought the buoy home last fall but contrived these measures for another country journey which is all Frost's delight to be with them.<sup>3</sup>

A further remark two days later revealed even more about Frost, who the factor declared. "wants it [the factory] to become an Indian Factory with his own wives and numerous family in and about it as was the custom before."<sup>4</sup>

These two statements together reveal that Frost had a close association with at least one and perhaps several Indian families who spent a good part of the year in the region of the post. He probably did not live with them but merely visited their tent(s) regularly.

Although Duffield's suggestion that Frost's wives and family roamed in and about the fort at one time may point to their having shared his apartment, they probably did not. In the first place Duffield thought the post was very badly run before his arrival and wished to cast aspersions over the previous Factor. In the second place, Frost would have been hard pressed to keep such a large clan within the confines of his "cabin", which was probably one room in the men's flanker. Even if his presence on the council allowed him to live in the officers' flanker, he probably was not allotted enough room to share it with a large family. Therefore, Frost and any other employee of the Company, except the Factor in charge of a post, probably maintained only frequent visiting privileges to the Indian tents in the neighbourhood of the post.

Because the Factor, other officers, and men lived in the flankers of the same large building, it is unlikely that many Indian women and mixed blood offspring actually shared the employees' living quarters. On the other hand the men may have had opportunities to visit their native families outside the confines of the flanker.

Even James Duffield, who in all likelihood did not maintain any kind of social relationship with the homeguard Indians, had a tent which he kept in the yard of the factory and in which he kept his "boys" (probably native children whom he used to perform personal waiting tasks and to act as interpreters). Duffield also used the tent as a retreat, especially during the summer, to "avoid the heat and noisome smell of the house".<sup>5</sup> If the courtyard of the factory allowed the Factor to pitch a tent, perhaps employees could use the same space for similar purposes.

Other Indians pitched their tents on the "plantation" or clearing around the factory complex. The men were probably not allowed to sleep overnight in the

tents on the plantation. Thus, if the men were allowed to sleep in tents at all, it would have been in tents in the courtyard of the factory.

Nevertheless, as the activities around the fort expanded and men went off hunting for more than a day; setting up log tents where they were getting timber during the winter; and also working at the goose tents and fishing tents, they may well have been accompanied by native families. Men who stayed so far away from the Factor could not be forced to conform to the demands of a distant bell. Neither could their personal lives be as closely monitored. Coupled with this was the undeniable fact that native women were singularly useful in situations that were removed from the main quarters. They could hunt small game and skin and stretch the pelts of larger fur bearing animals. They were also skilled fishermen and could make and repair clothing for use in the wooded regions. On these few shreds of evidence, it can be surmised that women began to accompany men as soon as seasonal expeditions set out from Moose to exploit the resources nearby (Van Kirk, 1981:41-2).<sup>6</sup>

Similar shreds of evidence from other posts substantiate this belief. In the 1750's at York Factory, the journal for that post revealed that James Isham allowed his men to reside with women at the goose tents or on short journeys. At Churchill, on the other hand, Joseph Isbister tried to prevent this happening. Albany also saw only the women of the chief officer being allowed free access to the fort. Other relationships had to be kept clandestine. Thus the period of the 1750's was transitional in that at some posts women were becoming accepted, but others were clinging to the more traditional view that only chief factors could keep native wives and families. The London Committee, of course, continued to believe that no one should have a native family, not even to cement trade relations.<sup>7</sup>

The Company began to change its view of native families only when it began to move inland in response to the heavy opposition of Canadian fur traders. When Eusebius Kitchen, Factor at Moose, announced matter of factly in the post journal in 1772 that his "own woman" was ill, he was breaking with the tradition that certainly existed at Moose and probably existed elsewhere of not discussing his personal relationships in the official post journal. Four years later Mr. Atkinson, the sloopmaster, was said to be going to Eastmain to "fetch his woman". This was the first mention in the post journal of a woman taking an employee's attention and requiring Company time to have her wishes accommodated.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, the men in the field were beginning to believe that the committee in London no longer objected to the idea that the Company's officers and men should have normal family ties in the fur trade country. This change in attitude had taken several generations to come about, despite the earlier situation being both unreasonable and, indeed, unworkable. By the time more liberal attitudes about native families began to prevail among the London committee, a mixed-blood community was firmly established at Moose. The children of most native women and working class or servant level fur traders probably grew up in the Indian tents and were not really regarded as part of the European community.

Responding to increasing competition from Canadian-based fur traders,

in 1777 Moose began to send individual traders upriver with trading goods. They built temporary or seasonal outposts and traded with the Indians on their own lands. Although this practice saved the Indians the long trip down the shoal and rock-studded river, it meant that Company men now had to travel many miles inland. They had to master the skills of transporting heavy and bulky trade goods and valuable furs while at the same time carrying as few provisions as possible. It was not an easy task. The Hudson's Bay Company began to turn to the native people who had, of course, long before developed these skills as a supplement to the European labour force after the inland expansion brought mushrooming manpower demands.

In response, native people from the upland regions began to congregate at Moose after the ice went out and spend their summers on the island waiting for opportunities to earn access to British trade goods. This movement, which took many years to be established as a tradition, meant a loss of economic independence for many of the upland Indians. It also indicated their trapping furs did not provide a stable enough income to allow the natives to avoid being drawn into dependency upon the Company to provide a supplementary income. Some of these Indians became part of the homeguard, but most continued to trap in winter and work for the Company only in the summer months, a tradition that the Company not only fostered, but in many ways demanded.

The homeguard, who grew up at the fur trade posts, became even more important to the labour force. They began to be used as regular employees of the Company when manpower shortages became critical. In fact they provided a convenient and readily available labour pool of people who were at home in the fur trade country.

Also of importance to the homeguard, the major change in the attitude of the London committee brought important changes in the role of native families. The Factors in charge of posts began to discuss the responsibilities and tasks of children and women even in their official records. For example, in 1796, John Thomas recorded that some women and children were tenting near the still house on the plantation. Less than a year later he announced that he was off sharing rabbits with two children. Then, in 1798, he described more fully the activities of the children:

18 December: in order to avoid daily repetitions concerning the boys & other children, I shall here remark that except when their services are required out doors they are kept at their books - the larger boys at times (as it is remarked in the course of the journal) are sent round the fox guns, rabbit snaring, & Gill's son is now framing a boat, they likewise attend on Chief's table, lead the hauling cattle, & in short are employed in any little offices they are capable of.<sup>9</sup>

By this time Moose Factory had been stocked with school books for four years and it was becoming commonplace to hire mixed-blood men as regular

fur trade employees. They were particularly useful for inland travel and opposing Canadians, working alongside both European fur traders and Indian labourers who were hired for the trip or for the day.

Still, nothing about the housing needs of this large mixed-blood group was mentioned in the post journals. Nevertheless, one can speculate that the chief officers had probably been living with their native wives within the confines of the post almost from the beginning. Therefore, a certain group of native women was learning about European life and becoming quite Europeanized (and their children, too, of course) from 1730 at Moose and earlier at older posts.

Another group of women, those who were companions of lesser officers or senior servants, were probably treated ambivalently. Depending on the chief officer, some of these women probably also lived within the confines of the factory. At other times they probably remained attached to native families (and may have even had native husbands) but were frequently visited by their European mate. These women may have spent considerable time during the year living in a tent on the plantation of the post, and at other times accompanying their European husband to live in a log tent in the neighbourhood of the post.

Where servant-level native families were housed for the first fifty years after their more general recognition is not known. They may have continued to dwell in tents either on the plantation or in the courtyard in the centre of the flankered factory. Some women may have begun to share their husbands' living quarters (one room or "cabin" in the men's flanker), which, of course, would also have to be shared by their children. If this occurred, or even if most families lived within the factory courtyard, then overcrowding and consequent sanitation problems would have been considerable. Clearly, as long as the bulk of the men lived in the factory most of the year, domestic relations were haphazard at best. Unfortunately, more details are not available.

The tradition of the men living within the palisades of the factory existed as long as the fear of attack from hostile Indians and more especially from hostile fur traders existed. This fear was only truly eradicated in 1821 when the two chief opponents in the fur trade rivalry amalgamated. Only then did the Hudson's Bay Company begin to move freely outside the barrier of the palisades and begin to erect buildings that were less easily defended against attack. Their existence before a time when defence was considered to be of only minor concern would have flown in the face of prevailing Company policy and philosophy about its entire operation.

In truth, however, at Moose Factory the first dwellings not inside the palisade were connected with the farm and boatbuilding facilities on the plantation. The first buildings to be erected away from the plantation were the steam sawmill erected upriver in 1811 and the storehouse that was put up on Middleburgh Island shortly thereafter to receive cargo from the London ship. Permanent dwelling houses were apparently attached to both of these facilities. Thus, at Moose Factory, the earliest stirrings outside the protection of the palisades actually preceded the union of 1821.<sup>10</sup>

On Moose Factory Island itself there is no evidence of the erection of any

private homes (except the factor's flanker which formed part of the factory building) before 1818. In the fall of that year and again in the fall of 1819, George Moore, assisted by a few other employees, erected and then finished off a dwelling house for his own use.<sup>11</sup> Although it is possible that the house stood within the palisades of the factory, more likely it was outside.

Again in the fall of 1822 two small separate residences came under construction. The first, a house to accommodate five Canadians took a mere week to construct, at least if the brief references in the post journal are indicative.<sup>12</sup> The second was described in the post journal as a "small House for Charles Beads".<sup>13</sup>

A drawing of the post in 1854 shows a dwelling house directly in front of the old factory building. Although post journals are fairly complete at Moose, they bear no evidence as to when that building, later known as the foreman's house, was erected. It is remotely possible that the foreman's house pre-dated a sketch of the post done before 1811. More likely, the building was either constructed for George Moore, was the men's house, or was built during 1832-34, a period for which the post journals are missing.

When individual servant dwellings first began to appear at Moose Factory they were usually built at least in part during working hours using materials the Company supplied. They were erected in the fall after the ship had been unloaded and after the country vessels had been brought up on the bank in preparation for freeze-up. As winter closed in, work on them usually stopped. Since they were built on land the Hudson's Bay Company claimed to own, their construction probably had to be approved by its officials. The surviving records have not revealed who owned the house once an occupant built it, or even who was allowed to build a house.

The first two dwellings mentioned in the post journal were erected for old but not especially high-ranking employees with large families. Certainly the existence of a family home would have made family life far more regular and normal for the servants, by European standards, at least, and unless families had previously crowded into the men's quarters it allowed the servant-level father for the first time to play a substantial role in rearing his children.

The trend toward separate dwellings for servants was well established by the latter half of the 1820's. By at least 1827 the Factor at Moose was allowing men with families who lived in detached houses to use one normal work day to gather and haul firewood for their own use.<sup>14</sup>

By the late 1830's the existence of a growing "settlement" at Moose Factory was in many ways considered to be natural and normal. However, within a few years a new chief factor arrived at Moose and decided to sweep away some of the less officiant edges of the Company's economic system. One alteration he proposed concerned servant dwellings:

The number of families at this place are very considerably increased of late Years, and it would be very desirable could Some method be adopted for the more larger families, being removed to other stations in the Country; or allow them to withdraw for



Canada, or Red River . . . as their contracts expire and after the removal of these family men, that no more detached dwelling houses be permitted, - substituting merely a range of Houses for single men, or those with Small families, nearer to the plan, from which the men could be more readily assembled when occasion might require.<sup>15</sup>

Thus Alexander Christie recommended reverting to an older method of running the fur trade. Sir C-corse Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company's regions in North America, did not respond to Christie's entire suggestion. He wrote, "It will be absolutely necessary to remove some of the numerous families now at Moose & to replace such family men, man, of whom are become quite useless, by younger & more efficient single men."<sup>16</sup> He did not mention building any new houses.

Had Christie succeeded in eliminating Moose Factory's older servants with families the complexion of that major post would have been transformed. Instead of growing as a small "settlement" of dwellings on the island, each house having its own garden, wood pile, and out buildings, the post would have reverted to its former fortress-like appearance.

However, the community surrounding the factory continued to grow. Over the years the Company extended its tradition of allowing the servants a day or two off in the late fall (eventually during the Christmas season) to procure firewood using Company draft animals to allowing them time to hunt geese and lending the Company's equipment to dig their gardens. The individual families carried their water from the river, storing it in a large barrel inside their door. They also used the river bank as a communal laundry room, heating wash water over an open fire. At a few key spots in the community communal ovens built by the servants themselves were fired once a week for bread-baking sessions (Judd, 1981b).

Like other buildings on the island, the servant houses were subject to rot. It would appear that for all but the most extensive repairs, an able-bodied occupant was expected to maintain his own home. The fur trade company was always frugal with building materials, but servant cottages, probably considered low-priority were no doubt spared only the poor-quality used construction materials.

This was not always the case. however, for in 1890 Joseph Fortescue complained about what he considered to be the misappropriation of lumber:

I regret to say the Steam Mill's extra facilities have hitherto borne little fruit - most of the timber sawn having gone to build houses for the married men or being sold (in debt) to Indians who have run up shanties all over the island to the number of close upon 50.<sup>17</sup>

Since all of the servant dwellings erected in the nineteenth century were built of logs,<sup>18</sup> the sawn timber was used only as lining for the outside walls

or as interior dividing walls for rooms. It appears that the Company supplied construction materials at no cost to its employees but sold them to Indians who wanted to put up buildings. An outside observer in the last decade of the nineteenth century commented at length about the standard of living among the servant classes at Moose Factory. Although his comments do not relate directly to housing they are nonetheless appropriate:

The servants of the Company, as distinguished from the hunters and trappers, are engaged for a term of years, at wages varying from twenty to thirty pounds a year, with a ration of food sufficient only for themselves. A few of the mechanics may get more, but the wages do not usually exceed that amount. Many of these are Scotchmen, or Scotch half breeds. As long as they remain unmarried they can live, and even save money. Few however do this: the far greater number marry Indian or half breed women. The singleration, together with what the wife may be able to add by fishing and hunting, suffices the young people for a while. But as child after child is born, the annual pittance of wages is drawn upon not only for clothing but for food. At the prices charged (and which it is to some extent necessary to charge) in this territory, the man's wages will not go very far. The quantity of game and fish at or near the trading posts is not great, not at all times to be procured, and when the families are large and chiefly girls they are, I fear, very sorely pinched to live. If the father dies, their condition is still more pitiable. There is no employment for women, and as to getting out of the country to seek it elsewhere, it is simply impossible.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the servants at Moose Factory lived basically in a subsistence urban economy with little or no ready cash, but with a certain amount of economic security. Their homes bespoke their way of life, which in many ways had changed very little since the establishment of the home guard had brought an end to their previously mobile lifestyle.

The servant dwellings at Moose Factory followed a general plan. Almost every house had a cottage roof with a gable window in the loft, a window or two at the rear, a window on one side, and a door and another window on the front (which usually faced the river). Brick chimneys were not common, and none of the houses appear to have had dormers. Occasionally, storm porches were added for the winter season to keep wind and snow from drifting indoors, but this was not common if the door was on the leeward side of the house (Judd, 1982a).

Almost every servant dwelling had a vegetable garden that included an ample crop of potatoes. The garden often stood in front of the house, which meant in many cases that it occupied the warmer, leeward south-east side. At least some of the homes piled their firewood in a teepee shape so that it would not become stuck in winter snow and ice. Larger buildings stacked stove

length wood in the more traditional manner. Most homes appear to have had outbuildings, including a privy, and sometimes a tool shed which was either attached to the house or stood alone. These outbuildings were apparently randomly placed in the vicinity of the houses. In winter, paths to the woodpiles and outbuildings were kept not so much free of snow as well packed to make access easier. Yards, or areas around the houses, were usually cluttered and no real attempt was made to maintain a manicured lawn. Houses were generally spaced far enough apart that the danger of fire spreading from one to another was minimized (Anderson, 1960:171).

The interior of houses were seldom described in records that have been preserved, and no photographs remain to give a pictorial record. However, Bishop Newnham, an Anglican missionary who lived for many years in the community, described them and gave snippets of the way of life of their inhabitants in a charmingly romantic, though racially prejudiced, vignette:

Let me, then, introduce you to a pretty little native, Maggie by name. Her age must be about eleven years... but age is not much considered in these parts, and hardly any of the children... even quite big ones, can tell how old they are... As we met her... coming down with her little tin pail, or as it is called here, kettle of milk, which she has just fetched from the Company's dairy, for her baby brother is ill, and her father is a servant of the Company, so she has an order from the authorities to get her kettle full of milk every evening for some time to come.... Maggie is coming along in her staid little way, with her plaid shawl over her head... But her leisurely movements are slightly quickened by the appearance of her mother at a door not far away... and the kettle is carried indoors, where baby is soon comforted with the needed drink, and packed away for a sleep in the oddest little hammock, slung from the ceiling right over and across the mother's bed, so that she can put up her hand, if the baby wakes in the night, and give it a swing without really disturbing herself. Certainly the trouble of babies is minimised here where they are packed up so snugly, and kept so warm and quiet in their moss bags, laced into the bright stuff case, too well known to need describing here.

Whilst the baby sleeps we will look round this little home, first taking note of the mother... She is busy at this moment over her little stove, for the factory bell has just rung for the men to leave work, as it is six o'clock, and a shout and scramble of bare feet outside tells that the father is in sight, and the shoal of children are off to meet him. Where they all get stowed away at night is a marvel, for the upper floor of the house is not much used in winter, the lower room, which opens straight from the grassy bank, being the common room for every one and everything. What sort of furniture, did you ask? Well there is a very useful

stove, that is the one indispensable article in every home, two short benches or stools, easily moved to wherever they may be needed, and a small table. Two big beds, covered with wondrous patchwork quilts, take up a good deal of the space, and accommodate a fair number of the family at night; for the rest and for any visitors, well, they can roll out rabbit-skin rugs or other bundles on the floor, and roll them out of the way during the day. Lilac print pillowslips can be kept as clean as white things, but they certainly do not give the same fresh look to the bed.<sup>20</sup>

This home could have been any of the houses that by at least 1928 were recorded as being 1½ stories and having two rooms. The activities and furnishings were probably typical of all of the servant dwellings at Moose Factory. The division of the main floor into two rooms probably meant that one room was given over to sleeping, while other activities took place in the main room. Probably the parents and youngest children slept in the bedroom.

Up to a century previously, when the homeguard generally lived in tents in the vicinity of the post, their homes had been even smaller than the log cottages, but their portability had enabled them to move at will. If families lived in the men's house in the factory, they encountered extremely crowded conditions with no portability.

The move into small, individual cottages meant that families were able to locate at some distance from one another, but once located, their homes became at least semi-permanent fixtures. Yet the concept of moving houses was not totally lost. Every winter a home or two on the island was "shifted" to a new location, a task performed with the help of logs which were used as rollers and a team of oxen or horses.<sup>21</sup>

If the alterations to one of the last surviving log cottages at Moose Factory can form a reasonable example, the interior of the homes were also changed frequently. The home now owned by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, but formerly and for many years the family residence of Herbert McLeod, has undergone regular major changes. Windows became doors, and doors were filled in to be windows; the one or two interior walls were also knocked down and moved around. Thus, despite forming a permanent shell, the log dwellings were able to be altered as the needs and wishes of their occupants changed.

In many ways these tiny cottages were reasonable compromises between the nomadic lifestyle that typified living in an Indian tent and the permanent homes that typified the European style of life. The chief disadvantage of these log cottages, and their most pressing unresolved problem was sanitation, a condition which plagued all crowded European-style communities at that time.

According to a report on the transport needs of Moose District in 1901,

The population at Moose in July (1901) was 571, 193 being Company employees and their families. There is a good deal of crowding, the sanitation of the place is defective, the amount of sickness lately dreadful.<sup>22</sup>

According to Bishop Newnham, life at Moose was healthy as long as the people were able to be outdoors, and as long as they could get fresh meat, but the bishop observed, "To begin to nurse an ailment is just fatal in the ill-ventilated, over-crowded houses."<sup>23</sup>

Most of the houses were the property of the Hudson's Bay Company, though some servants owned their own,<sup>24</sup> These servants may have built their own dwellings on their own time; some were perhaps allowed company time to build a home. By 1928, about one third of the separate dwellings were said to be owned by individuals,<sup>25</sup> and in the 1930's company-owned residences were rented for about \$5. per month to an employee.<sup>26</sup> The land upon which the houses sat, however, always belonged to the fur trade company. This meant that the company could refuse permission for owners to put cellars under their homes and could request that houses be moved to different locations on the island (Judd, 1982b). Only in 1978 were residents of the island at last able to own not only their houses, but also the land they stood on.

At present on Moose Factory Island all but a small handful of the old log cottages and their more recent sawn timber sisters have been replaced by more "modern" dwellings: pre-fabricated houses, trailers, and southern-style bungalows with several small rooms and central heating. Only the older homes can adequately be heated by a wood stove or two, still the cheapest and best means available in this region of scrub softwood and astronomical costs of fossil fuels. On much of the Island, sanitation is still of the most questionable quality.

It is time for those agencies responsible for housing in northern communities to reconsider the traditional and continuing lifestyle of the local native (homeguard) groups. Perhaps it is not too late to reconsider the present trend of replacing northern cottages with southern-style bungalows and produce a new community development model more in keeping with the longstanding social traditions and environmental and economic realities that persist in communities such as Moose Factory, Ontario.

#### NOTES

1. Hudson's Bay Company Archives. B.135/a/6, Moose Post Journal, 26 Dec. 1735.
2. HBCA, B.135/a/11, Moose Post Journal, entry for Sept 17, 1741.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., entry for 18 May 1742.
5. Ibid.. entry for 26 Nov. 1741.
6. Although the practice of setting up seasonal camps was in place by the

- 1750's, only in 1796 did the surviving written record reveal any clear evidence that families also came. At that time the post journal recorded, "sent Chilton and his mate to the N shore to tent". HBCA B.135/a/84, entry for 27 Oct. 1796.
7. Sylvia Van Kirk. *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*, Watson and Dwyer, 1981, pp. 41-42.
  8. HBCA B.135/a/52, entry for 16 Sept. 1772; B.135/a/58, entry for 13 Oct. 1776.
  9. HBCA B.135/a/83, entry for 9 March 1796; B.135/a/85, entry for 7 Nov. 1797; B.135/a/86, entry for 18 Dec. 1798.
  10. The information in the foregoing two paragraphs was taken from Carol Judd, *The Changing Faces of Moose Factory in Moose Factory Heritage Survey, 1980-81* by Arthur Ray, 1961 Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, p. 61 & 89.
  11. B.135/a/119a., entry for 2 Nov. 1818.
  12. B.135/a/125, entries for Oct. 28 and 4 Nov. 1822.
  13. Ibid.
  14. B.135/a/130, entry for 24 Dec. 1827.
  15. HBCA D.5/8, Governor's Official Correspondence, Alexander Christie to George Simpson, Moose Factory, 14 Jan. 1843.
  16. D.4/28, Simpson's Outward Correspondence, Simpson to Christie, Lake Huron, 12 May 1843.
  17. D.20/58, 1 Feb. 1890, J. Fortescue to Joseph Wrigley, Commissioner, HBC, Winnipeg. A "Shanty" was a small, one room dwelling with a "shed" roof.
  18. Fur Trade Post Plan Book, uncatalogued, extract of table to Plan of Buildings at Moose Factory, Outfit 258.
  19. HBCA D.26/16 (1890, Borron's Report).
  20. S. Newnham, *Life At Moose Fort*, n.d., n.p., pp. 5-5.
  21. Personal communication with Herbert MacLeod, Moose Factory, July, 1981.

22. HBCA B.135/e/33, 1900-1901 Report on Transport, James Bay, p. 7.
23. S. Newnham, *Life*, p. 12.
24. HBCA, uncatalogued Plan of Moose Factory, 1928.
25. Personal communication with Bert Morrison, Moose Factory, June, 1980.
26. Personal communication with Andy Faries, July, 1980.

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1982h *Through their Own Eyes*, in Arthur Ray: *Moose Factory Report to the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation*.

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