



The Company of Adventurers: A Narrative of Seven Years in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company during 1867-1874

Isaac Cowie

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The Hudson's Bay Company had been operating for nearly two centuries when young Isaac Cowie joined it in 1867. He sailed from the Shetland Islands to Rupert's Land, finally reaching York Factory, where he awaited his assignment. Company of Adventurers describes the early, lusty history of the HBC and the years of Cowie's service, when manufactured goods were driving out the demand for furs and buffalo hides. It contains rare information about the Assiniboin and Plains Crees Indians during the period before their confinement to reservations.

Alive to the historical and ethnographic value of his writing, Cowie tells about his tenure as a clerk (later manager) at Fort Qu'Appelle in southern Saskatchewan, the colorful personalities who served with him, the wide-ranging fur brigades, remote outposts, and the Company's relations with Indian tribes. He was the first white man known to have set foot within the Swift Current District when in 1868 he hunted buffalo there. His dealings with the Métis during the Red River Rebellion placed him where history was being made.

In an introduction to this Bison Book edition, David Reed Miller discusses how Cowie fitted into a great commercial enterprise and how he became a victim of unpleasant circumstances that forced his retirement in 1891.

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