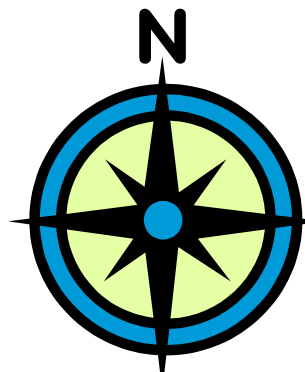


A Continental Voyage: Alexander Mackenzie

5.3.3
b

*Voyages From Montreal Through the Continent of
North America, etc. etc.*

*To His Most Sacred Majesty George the Third
This Volume is Inscribed, By His Majesty's Most
Faithful Subject, and Devoted servant,
Alexander Mackenzie*



[From the Preface]

The toil of our navigation was incessant, and oftentimes extreme; and in our progress over land we had no protection from the severity of the elements, and possessed no accommodations or conveniences but such as could be contained in the burden on our shoulders, which aggravated the toils of our march, and added to the wearisomeness of our way...

I explored those waters ... and traversed those deserts where an European had never before presented himself... when to these considerations are added the important objects which were pursued, and the dangers that were encountered, and the difficulties that were surmounted to attain them, this work will, I flatter myself, be found to excite an interest...

[About the *coureurs de bois*—literally translated, “runners of the woods”]
... they became so attached to the Indian mode of life, that they lost all relish for their former habits and native homes. Hence they derived the title of *Coureurs des bois*, became a kind of peddlers, and were extremely useful to the merchants engaged in the fur trade; who gave them the necessary credit to proceed on their commercial undertakings. Three or four of these people would join their stock, put their property into a birch-bark canoe, which they worked themselves, and either accompanied the natives in their excursions, or went at once to the country they knew they were to hunt. At length, these voyages extended to twelve or fifteen months, when they returned with rich cargoes of furs...

Source:

Excerpts from the Title Page, Preface pp. vii, viii and Chapter 1 “A General History” p. 2, from the diary of the explorer Alexander Mackenzie, believed to have been written in 1801. Note: Contemporary spelling has been used.

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