WATERY PLACES & ARCHAEOLOGY

The cover image is a detail from Hydrographical Basin of the Upper Mississippi River From Astronomical and Barometrical Observations Surveys and Information by Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, 1843.

Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community is produced by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing and the University of Minnesota Institute for Advanced Study.

Editors

Editor:
Patrick Nunnally, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota

Administrative Editor:
Phyllis Mauch Messenger, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota

Assistant Editor:
Laurie Moberg, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota

Media and Production Manager:
Joanne Richardson, Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota

Contact Us

Editorial Board

CONTENTS

FEATURE

THE VIEW FROM WATERY PLACES: RIVERS AND PORTAGES IN THE FUR TRADE ERA
By Amélie Allard and Craig N. Cipolla

On the drive northward from the Twin Cities on the straight and flat road of I-94, and then Minnesota's Highway 10, the landscape of urban and suburban development slowly cedes to wide open fields and scattered towns, sometimes lined with rows and patches of trees. This is not the most exciting or scenic of drives, but it's exciting to us nevertheless, because this is the way toward another season of archaeological fieldwork on a late eighteenth-century fur trade post located on the Leaf River in Wadena County. Despite this excitement (that all archaeologists feel at the thrill of unearthing the past), there is this unshakable feeling that we are leaving the bubbling

Fall of the Grand Recollet, French River, Ontario, by John Elliot Woolford, 1821.
Via the Toronto Public Libraries.

and lively environment of the Twin Cities and the University campus for, well, the middle of nowhere.

The road leading to the research site, which is known as Réaume's Leaf River Post, is an almost invisible dirt road that one accesses by taking a right turn off of a numbered county road, and it's easy to miss. Luckily, we have been here a few times, and have found landscape features (human-made and not) to remind ourselves when to take the turn. The site is on private property, but we have authorization to drive and walk all the way to the end of the field, where a patch of trees is visible. The walk through those woods is made unpleasant by all the mosquitoes, but it's worth it because all of a sudden, there it is, in all its beautiful, sun-touched splendor: the Leaf River.

At this location it's a relatively wide river, and the current is surprisingly strong, causing some erosion on the high banks where the site is located. For archaeologists like ourselves, this has specific implications: erosion is part of those natural processes that will affect a research design, especially where to excavate, and in considering what archaeological information may be lost to those waters. But despite this threat to archaeological potential, it's a beautiful spot. Suddenly, from the view of the river, it is easy to understand why, over two hundred years ago, this place was far from being "in the middle of nowhere."

In fact, it may well have been at the center of many things.

Figure 1. Photo of the Leaf River from the Réaume's Leaf River archaeological site. Image courtesy of Amélie Allard.

This is because rivers in the fur trading days of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were like highways, and the portages that allowed traders to avoid rapids were like HOV lanes on the freeway. Traders borrowed from Indigenous peoples the birch bark canoe and adapted it to their needs, and each year hundreds of brigades of them used the waterways of North America to transport goods from Montreal to interior trade posts. But rivers did more than merely allow traders to travel long distances efficiently. They constituted the trade itself, playing major roles in the ways in which fur traders understood and created senses of place and experienced the landscape. Rivers had an impact on social interactions among a diversity of trade participants, allowed traders to express and negotiate their masculinity in particular ways (Cipolla and Allard, n.d.), and affected how people reckoned time (see Mann 2017). In other words, rivers became very much a part of the traders' geographic imaginary—what we understand as an ensemble of thoughts, preconceptions, and expectations about the landscape and people's place within it. Framed differently, rivers, rapids and the portages that circumvented them were powerful places, where things, people, animals, and the immutable forces of gravity in the form of current, gathered. In this context, humans, in particular local Indigenous peoples, métis, and European-descended voyageurs, gave rivers and portages meaning in various ways.

Historical archaeology, or the combination of archaeology with documentary sources, provides a fascinating standpoint from which to view these processes. Indeed, historical archaeologists are trained to ask questions about past people's identities, about how they interacted with each other and with the environment. Studying rivers or their agency is not typically part of that training but the more we considered and learned about the late eighteenth-century fur trade, the more we realized the rivers themselves were

worthy of serious attention. The power they have held over humans since time immemorial, and their centrality in dictating the way the fur trade developed and changed over time, are not to be considered lightly.

It is in this frame of mind that we set out to explore influences beyond the human scale, in other words, not just human understandings of rivers, but rivers pushing and pulling humans. In this essay, we explore the gathering power of rivers, highlighting their role in constituting fur trade history. Although the might and importance of rivers may seem obvious, they have received little attention in the archaeological and historical literature on the trade. As Matt Edgeworth (2011) has pointed out, this is not a point that archaeologists often write about, let alone recognize. Rivers are truly the "dark matter" of landscape archaeology (2011, 25–26); rivers are the prime movers of landscapes, but archaeologists rarely acknowledge their power or influence. Edgeworth's argument is to challenge the view of rivers as purely natural, and rather show that throughout history they have also been cultural (altered by humans). We agree, and would push this a little further and say that, as components of the riverine landscape, rapids and portages too are deserving of our archaeological attention. We would like to illustrate this through two examples. The first one emphasizes the importance of portages and places in the establishment of trade posts like Réaume's Leaf River Post in Minnesota, as well as the social relations that are entangled in this use of space. Portages, or "carrying places," were land-based paths that river travelers took in order to circumvent rapids or waterfalls. Portages and rivers are therefore closely related; portages, by definition, depend on the rivers for their identities. The second example draws from our current research on underwater archaeological collections recovered from Ontario's riverbeds. It highlights the materiality of the rivers themselves, and their indomitable gathering power.

A Little Theory...

Some definitions and brief theoretical stances are probably in order at this point. We find inspiration in geographer Doreen Massey's work in considering place as a meeting and gathering place, the "location of intersections of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and interrelations, of influence and movements" (Massey 1995, 59). The ways in which humans make places or make sense of a particular space, through movement, stories, imagination, habitual practices, is also a tool for historical imagination (Basso 1996, 5), it is a way of constructing history itself, of fashioning novel versions of "what happened here" (Basso 1996, 6). As anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007, 2) reasoned in *Lines: A Brief History*, "To be a place, every somewhere must lie on one of several paths of movement to and from places elsewhere. Life is lived...along paths, not just in places...." Drawing inspiration from these works, we look not only at land-based placemaking during the fur trade era, we also consider paths of movement, including portages

and rivers themselves. Following thinkers like Ingold, we draw from recent elaborations of "assemblage" theory, a purposefully vague set of ideas and approaches that emphasizes the ways in which human-nonhuman relations constitute and bind one another into social wholes. The latter emerge from the interactions between their heterogeneous parts. Once in place, the assembled whole can start "acting as a source of limitations and opportunities for its components" (DeLanda 2016, 21). Emphasis is put both on the materials making up the components as well as the practices. An assemblage is therefore defined as the interactions between the components, not the result (McFarlane 2011, 653), it is emergent, *becoming*. Because they emerge out of an assembly of relations between humans and nonhumans, places and paths can thus be considered as assemblages, gathering together different entities, including humans, nonhumans, and a combination thereof (Jervis 2016, 385).

1) Portages: Carrying Places

The Portage road is truly that to heaven [...].
Men who go over it loaded and who are obliged to carry baggage over it, certainly deserve to be called "men"!!!
François Victoire Malhiot, (translated from French in Worthington 2010: 6)

The archaeological site of Réaume's Leaf River Post represents the remains of a small, late eighteenth-century trading post (Figure 2). It is characterized by at least two stone-lined fireplaces, one associated with the trading house and the other with the crew's sleeping quarters. The structures were enclosed within a picket palisade wall flanked by two diagonally placed bastions, one overlooking the river, and the other facing inland (Figure 3). Such defensive

features are not unique to Réaume's Leaf River Post, but are relatively common in other sites of the same period and area. Rivers, as the major routes within the fur trade landscape, played an important role in constraining or facilitating movement and access to the post. During the deep of winter, most rivers froze, hindering water traffic and making long journeys across the landscape more difficult. However, come spring the rivers opened up again, allowing for the flow of traffic to resume, bringing with it hopes of fruitful trading and fear of hostile incursions in equal measures. In trading posts where palisades were present, like we see at Réaume's, bastions were often diagonally positioned with the purpose of monitoring both the water and inland travelers.

Figure 2. Map showing the location of Réaume's Leaf River Post.
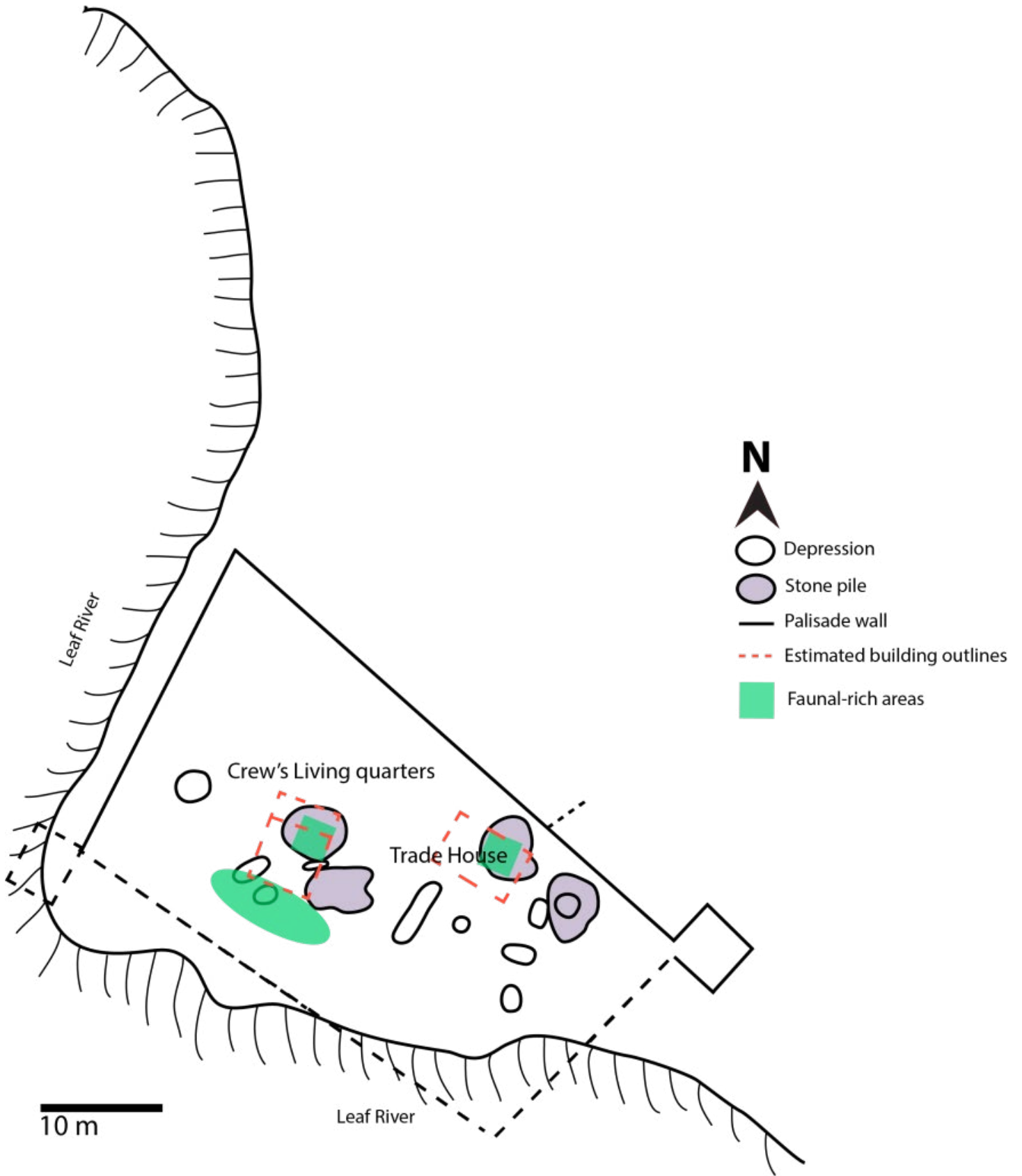*Image courtesy of Amélie Allard.*

Figure 3. Sketch map of the Réaume's Leaf River Post archaeological site. Image courtesy of Amélie Allard.

According to documentary sources, this post was built in 1792 by trader Joseph Réaume, who had been outfitted to take an exploratory and trading party down the Mississippi into what was then a contested zone between the hunting territories of the Anishinaabeg-Ojibwe and the Dakota. Jean Baptiste Perrault recounts that, while having tea with North West Company man John Sayer in 1791, the latter told him that he "had sent two outfits inland of the Fond du Lac, that Mr. Cadotte and Mr. Jos. Réaume […] had left, outfitted by Mr. [Alexander] Henry, a Montreal merchant, to also enter & lead the Indians of Leech Lake towards the plains" (translation from French by the authors, Cormier 1978, 85). In other words, this expedition "was intended to lead the Leech and Sandy Lake Ojibwe to contested hunting grounds west of the Crow Wing River" (Birk 1984, 57; 1999, 6). In his compilation of Ojibwe oral histories, William Warren ([1885] 1984) gave a detailed account of this expedition, and suggested that the Leaf River Post may be associated with this 1791-1792 outfit. He wrote:

> [Jean Baptiste] Cadotte, noted for courage and fearlessness, easily formed a large party, consisting of traders, "coureurs des bois," trappers and a few Iroquois Indians, who had assumed the habits and learned to perform their labor, of Canadian voyageurs to accompany him on an expedition to these dangerous regions. Besides his own immediate engages [sic] and servitors, the party consisted of the trader Reyaulm and his men: Pickette, Roberts, and Bell, with their men fully equipped for trading and trapping. Altogether they numbered sixty men …. (Warren [1885] 1984, 280–81)

The direct association between Joseph Réaume and the Leaf River post comes in a brief mention from trader John Hay in 1794 in "Captain McKay's journal," in which he recounts how his party, after going up the Leaf River, "arrived at Reaume's fort a fort built in 1792 when he was stopt by the Sious [sic]" (Quaife 1915, 206–07).

What is of particular interest here, aside from the importance of river travel suggested by the orientation of the bastions, is the strategic location of this post. Indeed, archaeologist Doug Birk pointed out that the location of Réaume's Leaf River Post is at one end of a long and well-traveled portage (Figure 4), a trail that connected the Cat and Wing Rivers and opened the way towards the Crow Wing River and Leech Lake (Birk 1999).

Places such as Réaume's Post and others were closely interconnected through the mobility and the movement that rivers and portages facilitated. Those two features of the fur trade landscape were closely and inextricably intertwined; the very existence of portages was contingent upon the rivers and the flow of water, and the associated dangers to both human lives and their cargo. Taking a portage to avoid rapids was a slow and backbreaking process, as voyageurs unloaded the canoes, carried two 90-lb. bales on their backs, sometimes in addition to the canoes themselves, and carried everything overland to the foot of the rapids (Kenyon 1969, 8). Because of these hardships, portages left long-lasting imprints on the minds of fur traders. This is well illustrated by the close attention paid to them in narratives and journals. "Portages are anticipated, and once traveled they linger on the mind," writes Birk (2007); "they have names and reputations that reflect conditions, impressions and experiences. Portages can influence exchange networks, settlement patterns, procurement activities, and spiritual connections to the land" (Birk 2007, 10). They are places where "people have adapted to, manipulated or succumbed to physical environments; they might serve as meeting places, trading stations, settlements, camps, cemeteries and other purposes" (Birk 2007, 11). They tend to have anecdotes and stories attached to them, many of which were of Anishinaabeg origin and shared by Anishinaabeg individuals (it is worth noting that by sharing such stories, the Anishinaabeg also staked a deep-rooted connection to this landscape). The following excerpt

from voyageur Jean Baptiste Perrault tells us such a story:

> [One of the traders] wintered at the portage de la tortue. It was so called because in the days of [the Indians'] fathers, it had been their oracle, which they came to consult. For the turtle moved, and always kept its head toward the enemy, which warned them to be on their guard; but some years before I passed there it had ceased to be an oracle. (Jean Baptiste Perrault in Cormier 1978, 52)

As places imbued with history and meaning, portages held strategic value in trade and politics;

building trade posts on ancient portages, therefore, carried strong messages of ideological and political control (Zedeño and Stoffle 2003, 64).

Even though the traders were highly mobile (seasonally so), Réaume's Leaf River Post is far from the kinds of constructions that the Anishinaabeg and Dakota peoples favored for an efficient mobile lifestyle. Instead, its rectangular enclosure and stone-lined fireplaces speak to European methods and styles of construction. Was Réaume's objective to create a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar landscape? To create a little piece of home in a space that was not well known or understood by his crew? Or was this

Figure 4. Close-up of Joseph Nicollet's Hydrographical Basin of the Upper Mississippi River, 1843, showing the Cat-Wing Rivers portage. Adapted from original courtesy of Cartography Associates (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

about power, and telling everyone in his environs "we are here"? Whatever the case, Réaume's choices and the material traces of his decisions give us a glimpse into the importance of *place* and in particular into the agency of the waterways to influence relations at the human scale. It brings to the fore how the choice to build a post at a particular spot was carefully thought out (i.e. at the end of a well-traveled portage with political significance), but also how access to the river was central to this decision.

2) Rivers and Rapids: Places of Fear and Danger

"In due time we got to the "Grand Calumet," a portage to avoid a succession of great rapids, rushing thro' a narrow channel with an impetuosity as awful as it is grand."
(George Nelson in Peers and Schenck 2002: 36)

George Nelson was sixteen years old when he signed up as an apprentice clerk for the New North West or XY Company. He recorded his experiences in the fur trade in journals, and later, in a collection of what he called "reminescences" (see Peers and Schenck 2002). As demonstrated in his words above, he and traders like him clearly understood the power and danger of the riverways that they navigated and sometimes circumvented in their daily travels. A collection of archaeological materials housed at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) sheds new and valuable light on trader-river relations and entanglements. The collections speak not only to the ways in which these river powers were entangled with fur trade history, but also reveal how archaeologists involved in the project were swept up, organized by, and inundated by river flows.

These collections—retrieved by scuba divers from Ontario riverbeds—were recovered from the French and the Winnipeg Rivers and most are currently housed at the ROM in Toronto. They were collected as part of the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project (QSURP), a joint operation between Minnesota Historical Society and ROM archaeologists in the 1960s and 1970s. This ambitious survey of Ontario's and Minnesota's fur trade waterways not only helped in developing underwater archaeology as a subdiscipline (Bass 1975, vii–viii), but also

brought up to the surface (literally) thousands of objects that sank to the river bottom when canoes loaded with trade goods shot rapids and capsized or sank due to the "impetuosity" mentioned in the quote from George Nelson, above (Allard and Cipolla, in preparation). The waters of the French and Winnipeg Rivers were particularly dangerous (Figure 5). One observer, for instance, noted that the "River Winnipic [sic] is full of showing rapids which occasions frequent carrying" (Macdonnell in Gates 1933, 107). Hudson's Bay Company trader Nicholas Garry further wrote in 1821: "we arrived at the Grand Rapid of the River Winnipic [sic] which we run without meeting with any Accident, though many Canoes have been lost here," (Garry in Bourinot 1900, 131).

Such accidents are well documented in the traders' journals and narratives (see Macdonnell in Gates 1933, 84), and these sometimes resulted in the loss of cargo in addition to human lives. Seasoned trader Alexander Henry the Younger recounted in harrowing details one such accident, which occurred in 1800 on the Winnipeg River:

> Aug. 9th. … One of my canoes, to avoid the trouble of making this portage, passed down near the N. shore with a full load…. I perceived the canoe on the N. side coming off to sault [shoot] the rapids. She had not gone many yards when, by some mismanagement of the foreman, the current bore down her bow full upon the shore, against a rock, upon which the fellow, taking advantage of his situation, jumped, whist the current whirled the canoe around. The steersman, finding himself within reach of the shore, jumped

upon the rock with one of the midmen; the other midman, not being sufficiently active, remained in the canoe, which was instantly carried out and lost to view amongst the high waves. At length she appeared and stood perpendicular for a moment, when she sank down again, and I then perceived the man riding upon a bale of dry goods in the midst of the waves. We made every exertion to get near him, and did not cease calling out to him to take courage and not let go his hold; but alas! he sank under a heavy swell, and when the bale arose the man appeared no more. At this time we were only a few yards from him; but while we were eagerly looking out for him, poor fellow! the whirlpool caught my canoe, and before we could get

away she was half full of water. We then made all haste to get ashore, unload, and go in search of the property. The canoe we found flat upon the water, broken in many places. However, we hauled her ashore, and afterward collected as many pieces as we could find. The men had landed a few packages above the rapid, otherwise our loss would have been still greater. (Henry in Coues 1900, 28)

Henry goes on to describe the loss in cargo, and does not mention the drowned man again. This may seem callous for him to worry so much about the cargo when he has just lost a canoeman. While it is impossible to know his thoughts, it is also important to keep in mind that Henry's
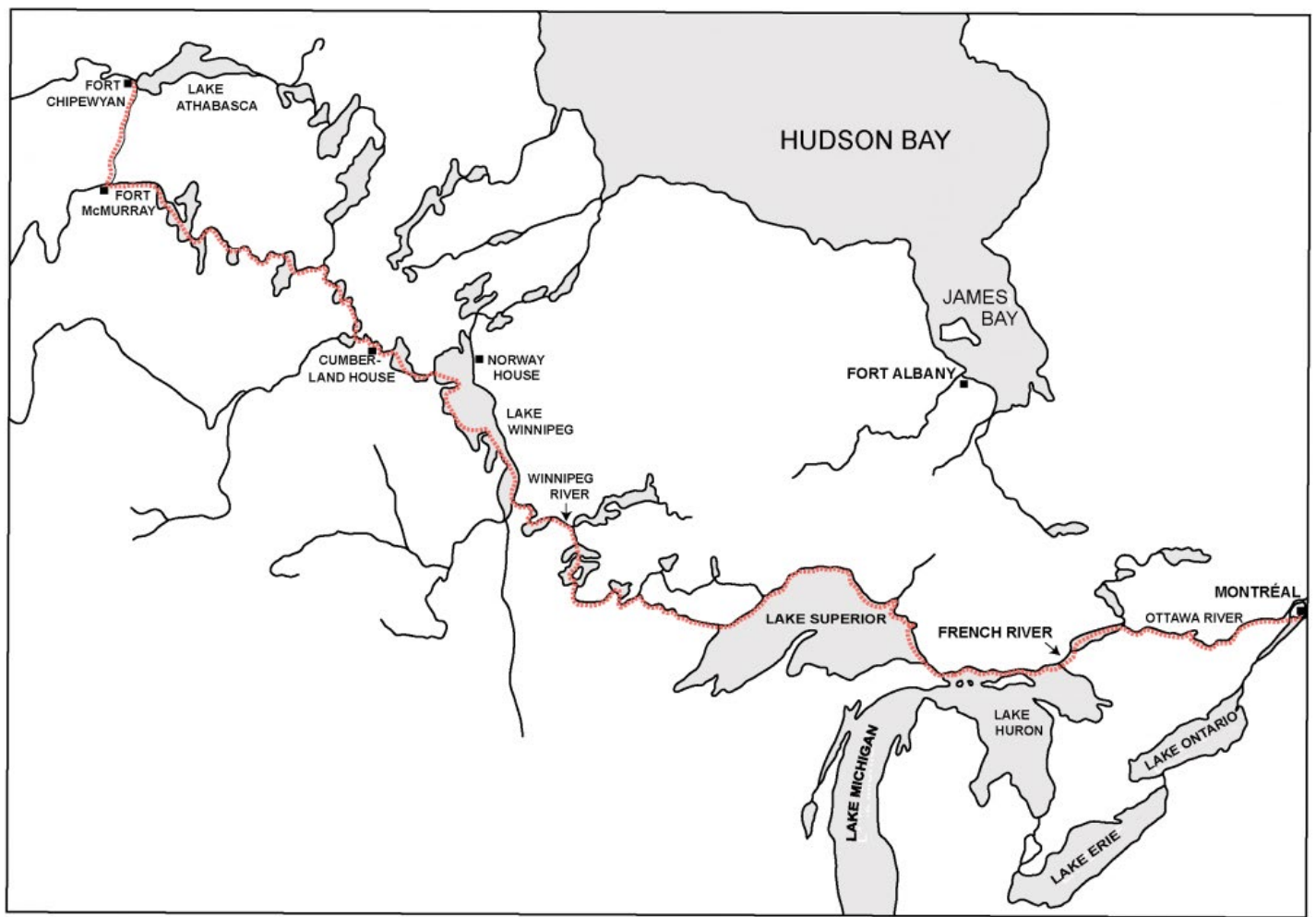

Figure 5. Map showing the location of the French and Winnipeg Rivers. Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.

journal was for his superiors' benefit, the proprietors of the company, and not a personal diary. As the man in charge of the brigade, Henry was responsible for the merchandise and had to answer to the proprietors for any losses. The following description of the lost merchandise also helps us understand how items were packed, and how they were retrieved in the case of an accident. Trade goods were put up in bales or "pièces" of about 90 pounds each. Liquor and ammunition were carried in kegs, while the bales of dry merchandise were carefully packed to keep them from getting wet in accidents and bad weather (Wheeler 1962, 41; Kenyon 1969, 6). When an accident occurred, the voyageurs would salvage what they could, namely the floating, lighter

bales. But they had neither the equipment nor the time to retrieve heavier packages, such as nests of copper kettles, bags of shot and musket-balls or gunflints, muskets and other gun parts, or crates of files. Those heavy metal or stone items defied even river flow and their weight and properties took them to the bottom (Kenyon 1969, 8–10). Many such objects now make up the underwater fur trade collections at the ROM, and might even be those very objects whose loss Henry laments in the following passage.

The loss amounted to five bales merchandise, two bales new tobacco, one bale canal tobacco, one bale kettles, one bale [musket] balls, one bale [lead] shot, one case guns.

Figure 6. Rapid of La Dalle, French River, Ontario, by John Elliot Woolford, 1821. Via the Toronto Public Libraries.

I was surprised that a keg of sugar drifted down about half a mile below the rapid, as its weight was 87 lbs.; it proved to be but little damaged. The kegs of gunpowder also floated a great distance, and did not leak. Whilst we were very busily employed repairing damages, by patching and mending the canoe and drying the property, a few Indians came to us. I employed them to search for the goods, but they could find none....

Sunday Aug. 10th. This morning we made another attempt to recover our packages, but our labor was in vain. Although, at the place where the canoe upset, the water was not more than six feet deep, the current was so swift that everything must have been swept below the falls.... Aug. 11th. Everyone was anxious to get ahead and show his activity, as is generally the case in the N.W. This produced a scene of bustle and confusion, which cannot be conceived by one how has not been eye-witness of the great exertion of which the Northmen are capable. (Henry in Coues 1900, 29–30)

These events are quite remarkable because they speak to the physicality and risk of the voyageur's work, as well as the ways in which the pull of gravity "gives water an energy that people had to either work with or fight against" (Edgeworth 2011, 84). It illustrates the very palpable agency of river flows, its indomitable character that is larger than human lives or histories. But it also illustrates the degree of entanglement between human lives and river flow. In this light, we could easily flip the standard fur trade narrative on its end, where instead of traders using rivers, rivers enticed, entrapped, and organized traders.

Nowhere was this relationship better demonstrated than "en voyage," while the men paddled and portaged their way from a regional depot to a specific location in the Interior. By the late eighteenth century, waterways were for the most part well known by voyageurs and each

river, each portage, each rapid, had a name and a story, which became an important part of the traders' geographic imaginary. Both the French and Winnipeg Rivers feature prominently in the traders' lived experiences and imagination. One of the stories about the French River that is retold in a number of accounts, for instance, is that of

> a beautiful spot called 'L'enfant perdu.' The Indians called it the "crying child" from the cries of a child [who had disappeared under water but whose cries] were heard in the ground.... after digging many days and hearing the cries of a child in distress, they ceased from fatigue & I dare say fear too. (George Nelson in Peers and Schenck 2002, 39; see also John Macdonnell's account of this story in Gates 1933, 83–84)

Stories such as this were not merely used to frighten the inexperienced; the dangers and risks of drowning were real, as the excerpt above demonstrates. Archaeologist Robert Wheeler pointed out that among the "many types of accidents that befell the traders and canoemen, perhaps the two most common occurred when canoes were shooting, lining or poling rapids or when they were caught in a wind squall on a big lake" (Wheeler 1975, 13). To avoid unnecessary risks, canoemen had different options: "If they were headed upstream, the voyageurs could half unload the canoes (demi-chargé) or empty them completely (décharge). Made lighter, the canoes might then be paddled or poled through the fast water, or if that were impossible, they were often towed with a line pulled from the shore. Going downstream the canoemen might elect to shoot ("sault") the rapids with or without making a décharge beforehand (Wheeler 1962, 42; 1975, 13). However, the recovery of thousands of objects from Ontario's riverbeds shows that, much like the case of Alexander Henry's loss of a canoe, risks were sometimes taken, with grave consequences.

The Power of Rivers: Gathering and Dispersing

What do the objects recovered from Ontario's riverbeds tell us about the power of rivers in driving human histories, or in the creation of a particular place? Water itself of course has powerful properties. Not only did the anaerobic and frigid environment of eddies preserve those materials, but the impact of gravity on this fluid material had the unusual ability to gather things. The turbulent waters of eddies and waterfalls can be a gathering force. In accordance with assemblage theory and the idea that heterogeneous components constitute and bind each other into wholes, rapids gathered—or trapped—things into an assemblage of nonhumans and humans composed of people's decisions, their practices and their fear, but also the fluidity of the water,

the heaviness of metal objects and the fragility of birch bark canoes, the hazardous rocks, and even gravity itself. The professional divers involved in the project noted that "a combination of features is necessary in rapids before they can catch and hold in an exposed position for two centuries any of the things that would fall out of an overturned canoe: moderate stream flow and clean rock bottom with crevices and boulders to trap the artifacts evidently created the one rich site so far discovered on the French River" (Macfie 1962, 51). A striking example of these gathering forces is seen in the recoverery of hundreds of glass "seed" beads from the riverbeds. The beads were almost certainly destined to be exchanged for furs with local Indigenous groups, but instead ended

Figure 7. Fall of the Grand Recollet, French River, Ontario, by John Elliot Woolford, 1821. Via the Toronto Public Libraries.

up falling into the rivers and gathered in cracks and crevices, sometimes tens of feet below the water's surface.

At the same time, river flow also disperses things. While the professional divers involved in this project could attest to the cache-like nature of the finds (figure 8), they could also attest to the powerful currents of the waters, which had taken the lighter items downstream (figure 9). As Kenyon described, "in the worst rapids, [a diver] must fight his way upstream by hanging onto rocks and crevices, crawling along the bottom like some prehistoric monster that spews forth air bubbles instead of fire" (Kenyon 1975, 54; 1969, 11).

We undoubtedly understand more about eighteenth-century histories of the fur trade because of the innovative underwater archaeological project described here. We would, however, argue that this is not only because of the artifacts recovered; it is also due to the experiences that the archaeologists and divers had as they wrestled with and pushed back against the rivers in order to complete their surveys. The dangers associated with the diving expeditions must not be underestimated, and many of the early publications by members of the project focused as much on the logistics of safely investigating the rapids as on a description of the finds. The indomitable character of the water, combined with the fact that the divers have not recovered much of lighter

Figure 8. A hoard of musket balls in the rocky bottom of the French River.
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.

items, like cloth, blankets, or tobacco, once again illustrates how the agency of river flows outscales human needs (e.g., Edgeworth 2014, 157) and human conceptions of space-time (Cipolla and Allard, n.d). Water channeled human experiences and lives, gathered them into an ensemble of human-nonhuman interactions, and sometimes

shifted human paths to re-gather them onto the rocky paths of the portages. Just like they did with the voyageurs of the eighteenth century, the rivers gathered the archaeologists, sometimes helping, sometimes hurting, and always threatening their progress.

Conclusion

As far as we know, there has been no systematic underwater archaeological survey of the Leaf River in Wadena County, Minnesota, yet the area is rife with local histories about the banks of the rivers as gathering places. While these stories are so abundant they may be apocryphal, the point is that those stories, and the part that

we, as humans, play in passing them along, continues to give places like these meaning. More to the point, a view from the river has the power to completely alter our perspectives of the landscape—it opens new avenues (literally), and makes us see things that were not visible before. It makes sense then to remember that when

Figure 9. One of the divers in the white waters of the Namakan River, Ontario.
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.

in the 1970s archaeologists were employed to survey the state of Minnesota for fur trade sites, the archaeologists Doug Birk and his associates used the waterways in order to best locate sites (see Rob Mann's feature in this issue for more on Doug Birk's work). In so doing they showed a sensitivity to, and an understanding of, the past centrality of rivers in fur traders' lives. Following in their footsteps (or more aptly, in their wake), our research on the late eighteenth-century fur trade has made us recognize the importance of rivers and waterways not as the background for human actions and economic pursuit, but as

dangerous places where materialities and non-human forces like gravity and flow get entangled in ways that powerfully affect human lives and experiences. The case studies of Réaume's Leaf River Post's position at the end of a portage and the underwater collections at the ROM each highlight the gathering power of different watery places of the fur trade landscape. Portages and rivers are closely related to one another, and in this sense they are parts of lines and gatherings, binding together humans and nonhumans into webs of relations.

Works Cited

Allard, Amélie and Craig N. Cipolla. N.D. Failure and Colonialism in the North American Fur Trade: the View from a Riverine Assemblage, In preparation.

Bass, George F. 1975. Foreword, in *Voices from the Rapids: An Underwater Search for Fur Trade Artifacts 1960–73*, edited by R.C. Wheeler, W.A. Kenyon, A. R. Woolworth and D. A. Birk, pp. vii–viii. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Series No. 3.

Basso, Keith H. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press.

Birk, Douglas A. 1984. John Sayer and the Fond du Lac Trade: The North West Company in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In *Rendezvous: Selected Papers of the Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1981*, edited by Buckley, Thomas, pp. 51–61. St. Paul: The Conference.

———. 1999. Minnesota Archaeology Site Form. Office of the State Archaeologist. St. Paul, Minnesota.

———. 2007. On the Trail of Untold Stories: Archaeological Inquiries Along the Old Grand Portage, *The Minnesota Archaeologist* 66: 9–20.

Bourinot, John, ed. 1900. Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822–1835: a detailed narrative of his travels in the Northwest Territories of British North America in 1821. Royal Society of Canada.

Cipolla, Craig N., and Amélie Allard. N.D. Recognizing River Power: Watery Views of Ontario's Fur Trade, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory,* forthcoming (manuscript accepted October 2018).

Cormier, Louis-P., ed. 1978. *Jean-Baptiste Perrault marchand voyageur parti de Montréal le 28e de mai 1783*. Montréal: Boréal Express.

Coues, Elliot, ed. 1897. *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest; the Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799–1814.* Volume 1. New York: Francis P. Harper.

DeLanda, Manuel. 2016. *Assemblage Theory.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Edgeworth, Matt. 2011. *Fluid Pasts: Archaeology of Flow.* London: Bristol Classical Press.

———. 2014. On the Agency of Rivers, *Archaeological Dialogues* 21(2): 157–159.

Englebert, Robert. 2008. Merchant Representatives and the French River World, 1763–1803. *Michigan Historical Review* 34(1): 63-82.

Gates, Charles M., ed. 1933. *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest: Being the Narrative of Peter Pond and the diaries of John Macdonnell. Archibald N. McLeod, Hugh Faries, and Thomas Connor, with an Introduction by Grace Lee Nute.* Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Ingold, Tim. 2007. *Lines: A Brief History.* London and New York: Routledge.

Jervis, Ben. 2016. Assemblage Theory and Town Foundation in Medieval England, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 26(3): 381–395.

Kenyon, Walter A. 1969. Our submerged archives, *Rotunda* 2(2): 4–13.

———. 1975. The Quetico Report. In *Voices from the Rapids: An Underwater Search for Fur Trade Artifacts 1960-1973*, edited by Robert C. Wheeler, Walter A. Kenyon, Alan R. Woolworth, Douglas A. Birk, pp. 45–54. Minnesota Historical Archaeology Series No. 3. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society.

Macfie, John. 1962. A short river reveals evidence of its long history. *The Beaver* (Winter): 48–51.

Mann, Rob. 2017. "They Are Fit to Eat the Divel and Smoak His Mother": Labor, Leisure, Tobacco Pipes, and Smoking Customs among French Canadian Voyageurs during the Fur Trade Era. In *Archaeological Perspectives on the French in the New World*, edited by Elizabeth M. Scott, pp. 58–82. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Massey, Doreen. 1995. The Conceptualization of Place. In *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, edited by D. Massey and P. Jess, pp. 45–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press/The Open Library.

McFarlane, Colin. 2011. The City as Assemblage: Dwelling and Urban Space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29: 649–671.

Peers, Laura, and Theresa Schenck, eds. 2002. *My First Years in the Fur Trade: The Journals of George Nelson 1802–1804.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Quaife, Milo M. 1915. Extracts from Capt. McKay's Journal—and Others. *Proceedings of the Wisconsin Historical Society at its Sixty-Third Annual Meeting*, Volume 63: 186–210. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Warren, William W. 1984 [1885]. *History of the Ojibway People*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Wheeler, Robert C. 1962. *Canadian Geographical Journal* LXV(2): 38–49.

———. 1975. The Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project. in *Voices from the Rapids: An Underwater Search for Fur Trade Artifacts 1960–1973*, edited by Robert C. Wheeler, Walter A. Kenyon, Alan R. Woolworth, and Douglas A. Birk, pp. 7–13. Minnesota Historical Archaeology Series No. 3. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society.

Worthington, Richard, ed. 2010. *A Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal, 1804. Journal du Fort Kamanaitiquoya A la Rivière de Montréal par François Victoire Malhiot*. Fur Trade Reprints Volume 1. Madison, WI: Fur Trade Reprints.

Zedeño, Maria N., and Richard W. Stoffle. 2003. Tracking the Role of Pathways in the Evolution of a Human Landscape: the St. Croix Riverway in Ethnohistorical Perspective. In *Colonization of Unfamiliar Landscapes: The Archaeology of Adaptation*, edited by M. Rockman and J. Steele, pp. 59–80. London and New York: Routledge.

Recommended Citation

Allard, Amélie, and Craig N. Cipolla. 2018. "The View From Watery Places: Rivers and Portages in the Fur Trade Era." *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, no. 12. http://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/the-view-from-watery-places.

About the Authors

Amélie Allard is an archaeologist and a recent doctoral graduate in anthropology from the University of Minnesota. She is now undertaking postdoctoral research at the Royal Ontario Museum. Her work has focused on issues of colonialism, mobility, and identity politics in eighteenth-century North America, especially in the context of the fur trade.

Craig N. Cipolla is Associate Curator of North American Archaeology at the Royal Ontario Museum and a member of the Anthropology Department at the University of Toronto. His research interests include archaeological theory, North American archaeology, settler colonialism, and collaborative archaeology. His publications include *Becoming Brothertown, Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium* (co-authored with Oliver Harris), *Foreign Objects*, and *Rethinking Colonialism* (co-edited with Katherine Hayes).