

residence at Mackinac; whether he went there from Detroit or direct from Albany we have not been able to determine.

At Mackinac fortune smiled upon Askin and he soon entered upon a period of steadily increasing prosperity. He held the appointment of commissary in the military department and this official connection undoubtedly forwarded in various ways the prosecution of his main business, the Indian trade. In addition to his own trading operations he engaged extensively in the transport business and in supplying the Montreal traders to the far Northwest with corn and other supplies essential to the prosecution of their operations. He conducted a trading house at the Sault in addition to the one at Mackinac, and near the latter place he developed a farm where, for several years prior to the Revolution, he conducted various experiments in plant cultivation, the earliest by many years of which we have record in the state of Michigan. He controlled a number of sailing vessels and acquired a commanding position in the carrying-trade of the upper lakes. He even contrived, by some method now unknown, to convey his vessels around the rapids of the Ste. Mary's into Lake Superior, an exploit whose very memory had long perished when it was again performed, as though for the first time, by certain enterprising Yankees three-quarters of a century later.

During these early years at Mackinac, Askin formed a number of friendships with men who, for a generation, were among the foremost merchants of Canada—with James McGill, Isaac Todd, Alexander Henry, and many others who are famous in the annals of the western fur trade. These friendships, for the most part, were terminated only by death, and they proved of material advantage to Askin in his later years. He formed friendships, too, with army officers and such other agents of the government as there were in the country, and this process was continued, of course, during his years of later activity at Detroit.

The commandants of the several western posts in the period with which we are dealing, wielded a power well-nigh absolute over the doings and fortunes of those who came within the orbit of their authority. Particularly was this the