

Northwest Company, which soon became so rich and powerful that for a long time they were enabled to monopolize the northern fur trade, and cope with the most powerful and favored combinations which the capitalists of Great Britain could bring against them.

In the year 1792, immediately after the noted expedition of John Baptiste Cadotte to the Upper Mississippi, the Northwest Company extended their operations over the whole Ojibway country within the limits of the United States, on Lake Superior and the Mississippi. Their trade in these regions was divided into four departments:—

The Fond du Lac department consisted of the country at the head of Lake Superior, and the sources of the St. Louis and Mississippi Rivers. The Folle Avoine department consisted of the country drained by the waters of the St. Croix. The Lac Coutereille department covered the waters of the Chippeway; and the Lac du Flambeau department, the waters of the Wisconsin.

The depot for this portion of their trade was located at Fond du Lac, but their great depot was at Grand Portage on the north coast of Lake Superior and within the limits of what is now known as Minnesota Territory. From this point they sent their outfits up Pigeon River, towards the northwest, and occupied the country of the Kenisteno and Assineboines. Here, each summer, the partners and clerks of the company, who had passed the winter amongst the inland posts, collected their returns of fur, and were met by the partners from Montreal with new supplies of merchandise. These yearly meetings were enlivened with feasting, dancing, and revelry, held in the great hall of the company. In the style of the feudal barons of old, did these prosperous traders each year hold their grand festival surrounded by their faithful and happy "coureurs du bois" and servitors. The eyes of an "old northwester," while relating these happy scenes of by-gone times, will sparkle