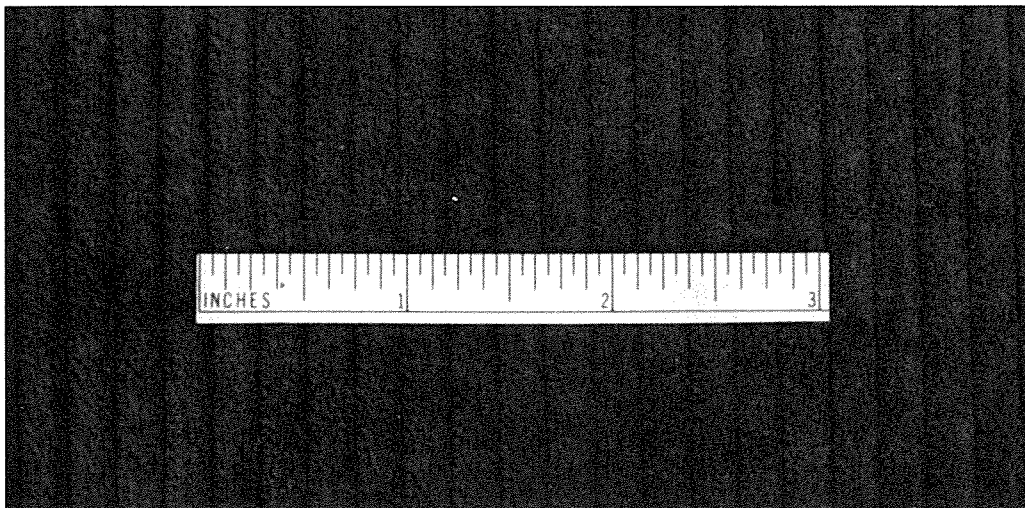


CORDUROY—A FABRIC OF THE FUR TRADE

By "The Engages"



Many fur trade enthusiasts do not think of corduroy as a fur trade fabric, but it was. One James Beckman sent a first order to England after the Revolution in 1784. It included corduroy, jeans, dimities and velverets.¹ In 1789 a weaver in Providence was advertising corduroys.

The fabric originated in France early in the 17th century. After 1800 England led in its manufacture and supplied most of the U.S. demand for years. Colors were brown, slate, other rich dark colors and also white.²

In 1806 and 1807 Nor'wester Simon Fraser mentioned giving a corduroy jacket to an employee and ordering corduroy trousers for himself.³

In 1805 Charles McKenzie of the North West Co. recorded meeting Assiniboines on the banks of the Missouri who had recently attacked some traders and taken Russia sheeting trousers, calico shirts and corduroy jackets from them.⁴

Following are some random notes which were taken during research in Canadian archives on purchases of guns and blankets:

NW Co orders 1802-1807 have recurring requests for corduroy, striped cotton and blue nankeen trousers

HBC orders for Columbia Dept. 1828 include Trousers of drab "cording," 12 pairs

HBC orders for Fort Chipewyan 1867 include "drab corduroy" and "black corduroy" trousers

Our readers may recall an illustration on page 6 of our Quarterly for Summer 1979 (Vol. 15, No. 2) which is a tintype of a tall Canadian with short capote, HBC sash and wide-wale corduroy trousers. The corduroy sold in the fur trade was woven with wales much wider than the familiar product of today.

NOTES

¹Florence M. Montgomery, *Textiles in America 1650-1870*. W. W. Norton & Co., New York. 1984, p. 206.

²Geo. S. Cole, *Cole's Encyclopedia of Dry Goods*, New York. 1900, p. 115.

³W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser 1806-1808*. Macmillan Co. of Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Canada. 1960, pp. 240 & 250.

⁴Wood & Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK. 1985.