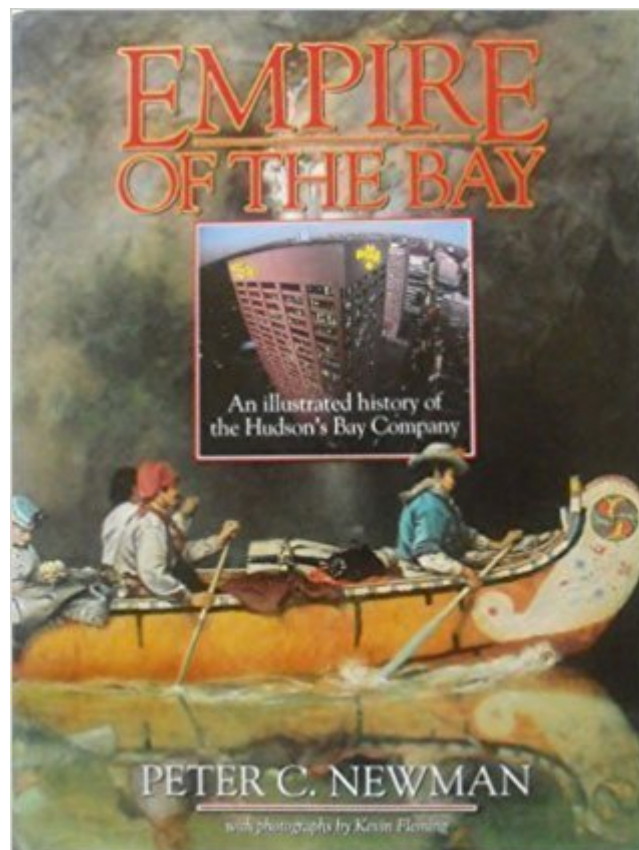




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Empire Of The Bay: An Illustrated History Of The Hudson's Bay Company



Synopsis

A history of the world's most famous trading company based on Peter Newman's history. In 1838 Sir George Simpson, the governor of the HBC, was toasted at a dinner as the "Head of the most extended dominion in the known world - the Emperor of Russia, the Queen of England and the President of the United States excepted". It was an astonishing but appropriate tribute to a commercial enterprise of unique scope and character, with trading houses that once stretched from the Arctic Ocean to Hawaii. Yet the history of the HBC is less the story of a company than of a people - its self-proclaimed gentlemen-adventurers mapped a continent and built a nation. The exciting story of the company and the people is told in this book.

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Customer Reviews

I have waited years for these to be re-issued. This is a collection of two of the author's previous books on the HBC (Hudson's Bay Company): *Company of Adventurers* and *Caesars of the Wilderness*. It takes its title from yet another of his books, an illustrated, large format volume published several years ago. This is history told in an enthusiastic, romantic style (as opposed to a fussy, dry, academic one) so the reader is greeted not with sociological studies and boring statistics, but with tales of adventurers and Indians, French trappers tramping through northern forests, crusty Scottish traders manning lonely outposts, and of course scheming English financiers in London. I could go on. The focus is on personalities and characters. This is the way history SHOULD be written. The author shows how the settling of North America was in large part accomplished through the activities of the HBC. It is a story generally ignored by most history books (especially American

ones). To my knowledge the author is the only one currently writing about the HBC. I highly recommend this book.

This book actually goes far beyond the Hudson Bay Company to tell the history of Western Canada. The real greatness of this book is the way the author takes a topic and makes it come alive. For example, when it comes time to discuss pemmican, the food used by the voyageurs, you get a mini-history of buffalo and how each part of the body is used. These lengthy digressions take away some of the chronological flow of the book, but they are well worth it. If you like to know what it was really like to live in a different place at a different time, this is the book for you.

Hudson's Bay Company is quite simply the most successful commercial enterprise ever known to capitalism. Imagine a company that controlled one twelfth of the earth's surface, whose domain was 10 times larger than the Holy Roman Empire, a company whose beginnings date from 1682, that developed its own Army, its own Navy and whose stock is still reputed to be owned by Britain's Royal Family. In the forward, the author claims this book is about the impact of Hudson's Bay Company on the development of Canada over the past three centuries. But it is really not. The author is being too modest. It is really about the impact of Hudson's Bay Company on the development of North America and how HBC actually was responsible for the formation of Canada and the United States as we know them today. Everything you read in this book is the result of the primary economic force of its time, fur. The fur business was the primary employer for the inhabitants of eighteenth century North America. As such, it was the primary driver for the continuing exploration of the North American continent. This then is not just a book about corporate wealth accumulation but of territorial exploration and definition, of competing, overlapping claims at a time in which there simply was no law. HBC was the fur business in Canada and in a very real sense it was HBC that defined the northern territorial limits of the United States. Read and enjoy this excellently written and well documented book. It is really a treasure. You will learn the amazing history of Canada and an incredible amount about the United States as well.

Newman escapes the traditional trap of history authors, making this book packed with facts and a lively, entertaining read at the same time. Anyone interested in HBC or Canada should read this book, as well as anyone interested in exploration, commercial development or Indian-European relationships. Many of the stories and anecdotes contained here are funny, sad or out-and-out tragic, and anyone familiar with today's corporate world will be amazed at how little things have

really changed.

If history is meant to elevate and entertain, then this book qualifies. Not only is the author's style engaging, but his commentary is itself illuminating. There's so much written these days about "colonial oppression" and the "politics of Empire", but it's refreshing to read a work that is conscientious of these issues without making them a guiding factor.

This is a tremendous history. Its scope isn't limited to Canada, but spans 400 years of North American history and touches nearly every corner of the world. No other corporation â" and certainly none of the great military conquerors â" ever controlled more of the earth's land area than the Hudson Bay Company. Anyone half-awake these days must be aware of the rise of incredibly powerful, international corporations operating seemingly beyond law, yet for greed, ruthlessness, and singular pursuit of profit it's hard to imagine many businesses will ever out do this grand-daddy of them all, the HBC. The HBC story is really appalling and enthralling, and Newman is an excellent writer in the style of Barbara Tuchman and Alan Moorehead. It's all an incredible adventure story, probably not much known outside of Canada, yet full of unbelievable characters and events. (Jules Verne's "Around the World in 80 Days" is based on the journey of an HBC executive, and other company men were the first to cross North America to reach the Pacific and Arctic oceans, beating Lewis and Clark by decades â" and doing it pretty much alone since the HBC was more interested in pinching pennies than exploring new worlds.) A really great book. I'd give it six stars if I could.

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