

The Tale of the Royal Beaver Hat

The following anecdote is based on the Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. I, 1670 - 1763. By E. E. Rich and published by the Hudson's Bay Record Society, herein The History.

In 1679 the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) was in a state of crisis as one of its founding directors, Anthony Cooper the first Earl of Shaftesbury [right](1621-1683) had fallen out of political favor losing both the office of Chancellor of England and his position on the Privy Council. So he resigned from the company which now fell under the governorship of James Hayes. This gentleman brought with him the support of the merchants of the City of London among whom were Sir Robert Vyner [below] and Richard Cradock. The latter was to prove 'a most active member' of the board.(The History p.88)



In order to stimulate the flagging consumption of fur, especially Beaver, the Hudson Bay Company tried to convince people to wear beaver stockings. Even though James Duke of York (one of the Company's governors) was given a pair of beaver stockings, the fashion still did not catch on (probably not a surprise). More successful than fur stockings was the use of Beaver hats. Two were ordered by the company for their royal patrons - The King (Charles II) and his brother James Duke of York - at a cost of five pounds each. There's nothing like royalty wearing a fashion accessory to have it adopted by the masses.



KING CHARLES II

Unfortunately the King did not live long enough to receive his free fur hat as on Feb 2 1685 he fell unexpectedly, and seriously, ill. The suddenness of the illness helped to fuel rumors that he had been poisoned by his brother James, the proud owner of a brand new and very large beaver hat. On the 5th Charles was received into the Roman Catholic church by Father John Huddleston, a priest he had met during his escape from Worcester (and into which family Richard's great grandmother Alice Latus's family had married a number of times centuries before). Charles died the next morning in Whitehall Palace leaving behind one unused beaver hat.



James Duke of York who became James II

At this point Richard Craddock stepped in to claim the hat for himself. He did so on the basis that he had supplied, some years earlier (1682), a number of pairs of snow shoes to John Bridgar who had been commissioned governor of Port Nelson on the James Bay. Unfortunately when Bridgar entered the mouth of the Nelson River he found Pierre Esprit Radisson already there as agent for the French and who challenged Bridgar's right to be there. Radisson had built a fort on the south bank of the Hayes River so Bridgar chose a spot on the north shore, and there built the first HBC establishment in that area - Port Nelson. Never having been reimbursed for what he had supplied Bridgar, Craddock took advantage of the King's demise to claim the hat for himself.

It is amusing to think of Richard Craddock wandering the streets of London wearing a hat originally intended to cover the head of the ruling monarch had not death snatched it from him. (see The History p. 167)

A listing of Richard along with Prince Rupert and the architect Christopher Wren has been found:

**The first Proprietors or Company, call'd the Hud-
son's-Bay Company, were,**

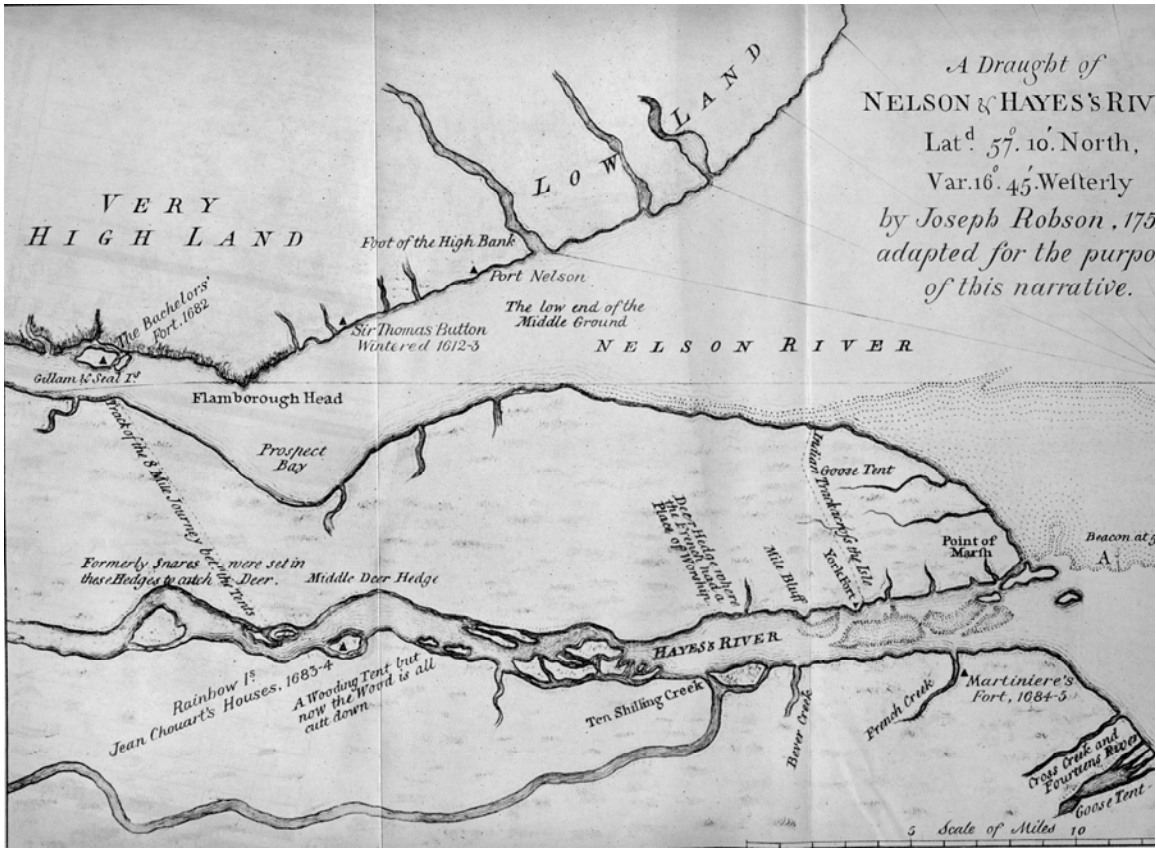
*Prince Rupert.
Sir James Hayes.
Mr. William Young.
Mr. Gerard Weymans.*

*Mr. Richard Craddock.
Mr. John Letton.
Christopher Wren, Esq;
Mr. Nicholas Hayward.*

Cc

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The above claims that Richard was one of the first proprietors whereas the history would suggest he was brought in later. I believe he was one the first proprietors but came to represent the merchants of the city of London viewpoint more forcefully after Shaftesbury left. Note that there is a family relationship between the Cradocks and the Wrens.



Map indicating Port Nelson

A LIST of the Names of all the Subscribers to the BANK of ENGLAND.

Note, Those Marked **** are Capable of being Chosen Governor, Deputy-Governor, or Directors :
*** Deputy-Governor, or Directors : ** Directors : * Have a Vote, and no Person more than one Vote.

The KING's and QUEEN's Most Excellent Majesties

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">A.</p> <p>*** THE Right Honourable Sir William Aihurst, Kt. and Lord Mayor of London</p> <p>**** Sir Thomas Abney, Kt. and Alderman.</p> <p>** Joseph Aunger ** George Arnold ** John Archer ** Dame Mary Ash * Sir Edward Abney * Edward Anthony * Paul Allestree * Richard Adney * John Ayres * Henry Adderley * Isaac Aime * Robert Atwood * Roger Atley * Mordecai Abbot * Henry Acourt * William Addy * John Andrews * John Atterbury Junior * Ruffell Alfop * John Albertson * Marmaduke Alford * Henry Allen * Oliver Atkey * Jacob Afflein * Richard Atkinson * Brabazon Aylmore * Dame Ann Andrews * Manuel de Almanca * Thomas Ashby * James Atkinson * John Adams</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B.</p> <p>**** The Honourable Hugh Bofawen. **** Brook Bridges **** James Bateman **** James de la Bretoniere **** Bartholomew Burton **** William Brownlow **** Simon de Brien **** Sir John Buckworth **** Charles Balle **** Joseph Bennett **** John Bull **** George Boddington **** John du Bois **** Adam Bellamy **** Arthur Baron **** The Right Honourable the Earl of Bradford. **** The Counts of Briggewater **** John Lord Berkeley **** John Bridger **** Brooke Bridges Kensington **** Bartholomew Beale **** Edmund Bayly **** Nicholas Baker **** William Bridges **** Thomas Barnes **** Samuel Bulceel **** John Bridge **** Robert Britton Senior **** Robert Britton Junior **** James de Batts **** Henry Buck **** John Borret **** Samuel Brewster **** Charles Bland **** John Bridges Middle-Temple **** Lancelot Burton</p> | <p>* Paul Boyer * John Bridges of Barton * John Butterfield * Richard Bromhall * Thomas Benfon * William Barnely * Abraham Beake * Joseph Biffet * John Bickley * William Beets * Robert Beachcroft * Thomas Bedford * John Benfon * Thomas Byfield * John Buttolph * Thomas Butler * Thomas Bowry * Daniel Barnard * Gibbons Bagnall * William Broughton * Timothy Burrell * Peter Burrell * Edward Barton * Thomas Brouncker * Francis Beyer * Richard le Bas * Elizabeth Bird * Mary Browne Mercers-Hall * Colonel James Butler * Robert Butler * Thomas Bland * Samuel Bifcepe * Henry Baldwin * George Bannister * Benjamin Brownfmith * Isaac Beringuir * Simon Baxter * Schem Pridges * Samuel Bradshaw * Thomas Barfon * Thomas Bromfield * George Burrard * Emma Baker * Robert Boddington * William Browne * Mary Booth * George Bond * Mark Anthony de la Bafted. * William Boddington * Thomas Bereau * Slingsby Bethel * Richard Brinley * Paul Buiffere * Christopher Bala * James Bruce * John Blgrave * John Billers * Isaac Bonovurier * Joseph Brooksbank * Isaac Brand * Robert Brough * Thomas Bathurst * Jonathan Blgrave * Samuel Blewot * David Beuzler * Nathaniel Browne * John Blankard * Marmaduke Bludder * William Branfon * Richard Batam * John Browne * Daniel Biddle * Martin Browne * Robert Barker</p> | <p>Magdalen Olimpia Beauchamp Elizabeth Boulter Humphry Bellamy Jane Baker Derick Barnevett John Braguire Thomas Blythe Edward Banbridge Timothy Baigueaux Francis Barnham Grace Barnham James Augustus Blondel Mary Bellers Colonel William Blenner Haffer Edward Bull Thomas Barnwell Augustine Brewster Henry Berkeley Samuel Barton John Berriman Samuel Browne Moses Barrow Robert Burridge Tobias Bridge Arthur Branthwaite Daniel Browne John du Bourdieu Benjamin Browne James Bescheffey David Boucheret William Barry Elizabeth Barber Richard Bescher William Biggs Gilbert Bury Obadiah Burnet Edward Billingfly Henry Billingfly Robert Bertworth Mary Blankard John Barnes Mary Brown Sr. Giles's. Samuel Bagwell Henry Bullock John Baker Samuel Burnell Nathaniel Blackiston Richard Borret Stephen Beckingham Daniel Briffick Tho. Bedford Embroiderer</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C.</p> <p>**** Elizabeth Countess of Carlisle **** Caesar Chamblain **** Peter Du Cane **** Sir Charles Cefar **** Hugh Chudleigh **** Theodore le Coq **** Joseph Chambrlain **** Sir John Cope **** Sir William Cooper **** Sir Robert Clayton **** Sir John Chardin **** Charles Chambrlain **** Ja. du Cane **** Edward Clarke **** Thomas Cole **** Richard Colclough **** Theodore Colledon **** John Colman Merchant **** John Cooke **** Sir Robert Cotton **** Sir William Cramer **** Sir William Craven</p> | <p>* William Coatsworth * Awnthons Churchill * Geo. Churchill * Abrah. Ciprian * Christoph. Cope * Abraham Coddin * John Colman Dr * John Carter * John Cammer * John Chadwick * Richard Cary * William Cooke * Thomas Crad. * Richard Crawley * Caleb Coatsworth * Francis le Cope * John Crawley * Edward Crefler. * Thomas Criffe * Nathaniel Camfield * Joseph Clarke * Gawen Corbin * William Chambers * Thomas Collet * Richard Chafe * Thomas Clarke * Benjamin le Cane * Robert Chandler * George Crefler * Henry Carter * John Combe * John Chonley * Rena Chambrlain * Thomas Croft * Joseph Chaplin * Peter Causton * Nicholas Cover * Thomas Crifty * Peter Cartwright * Nathan Cooper * Remy de Cloufent * John Crammough * Francis Carwell * Richard Cheyny * Charles Coeks * Robert Collins * James Cardonell * Matthew Cadwell * Nicholas Carler * Thomas Colby * Henry Cornelson * Woolfran Cornwall * William Chafe * Charles Cox * Jonathan Cartwright * Francis Chitty * Andrew Coleman * Joseph Collier * Joseph Collins * Abraham Chambers * Robert Coby * Richard Court * Nicholas Cooper * Francis Camfield * James Cooke * William Coleman * Ann Coleborne * William Clarke * Richard Clay * Magdalen le Clare * Elizabeth Clay * Thomas Cromie * Elizabeth Collet * Frederick Coleman</p> |
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Above Richard Cradock can be found listed as a subscriber to the Bank of England with two asterisks next to his name indicating that he is eligible to be voted as a Director. I believe this list was issued on the establishment of the Bank in 1694.