

Guide to Interpreting the White Oak Fur Post

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Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help provide an unified level of interpretation to the visiting public. It also serves to assist individual interpreters as they participate in the fun and challenge of presenting a reasonably historical accurate picture of the fur trade era to the public. The guide is *not* intended to be an exhaustive listing of all pertinent fur trade information and interpretation insights.

Any and all aspects of this guide are open to scrutiny and discussion. Historical facts are to be as accurate as we know them (even if we opt to "bend" them for the purposes of presentation). Roles of generalized and specific characters are always open to change. And, everyone is encouraged to devise skits and activities to enhance the interpretation.

Note: This guide is an ongoing "work in progress." Comments and suggestions should be directed to John Powers, Avant of the White Oak Nor'westers interpreter crew via the White Oak office: 33155 State Highway 6, Deer River, MN 56636 or via email through White Oak's web site: <http://www.whiteoak.org> or directly to him at: 721 N 16th Ave E, Duluth MN 55812; phone 218-724-2332; email: djpowers@cpinternet.com.

Interpretation Setting/Scenario

The year is 1798. The North West Company has been in existence since 1784. Technically the territory along the upper Mississippi belongs to the United States, but the NWCo continues to operate posts in the area (and will do so until just after 1805).

The actual trading post at White Oak was operated by Jean Baptist Perrault of the North West Company and was located on White Oak Point along the Mississippi River just southeast of Deer

River. The post was probably a single hut not unlike Toe's cabin and probably existed only for 1792-93. A non-NWCo trading "fort", operated by three men, was also located on White Oak Point this same winter. In other years, the Point was a common camping and meeting place for traders and Ojibwe.

We interpret the current White Oak post as a "replica" of a typical interior post during the era. Its layout is similar to NWCo posts at Leech Lake / Cass Lake, Lac la Pluie (modern day Fort Frances), Big Sandy Lake and Superior (Fort St. Louis) but its size is larger in order to accommodate crowds.

The White Oak post lies in the NWCo's Fond du Lac District. The administrative post for the District is Ft. St. Louis (Superior, Wi). John Sayer is the company's wintering partner in charge of this district. We interpret our wintering partner as working with Sayer in the district (in reality there was not another partner in the district. A commis, or senior clerk, ran each post.).

Other NWCo posts within the Fond du Lac district included Leech Lake / Cass Lake, (Big) Sandy Lake, and Red Lake (Lac Rouge), and somewhere on the St. Louis River. The posts at Pine City (Snake River) and Forts Folle Avoine (Yellow River) come later (1803-05).

In addition, there were a number of trading sites operated by the NWCo or by partners of the NWCo. According to Jean Baptiste Perrault's narrative, the following trading sites were active in the upper Mississippi River area (Perrault was outfitted by Mr. Todd, probably of Todd and McGill and Co which had 2 shares of NWCo stock):

- 1785-86 Perrault at Leech Lake; other single traders at Red Lake, Bowstring (near Inger)
- 1790-91 Perrault and Laviolette at Leech Lake; Sayer at Fond du Lac; Caselet, Reaume at Pine River; Jos. Reaume at Wild Rice Lake (west of Leech Lake)
- 1791-92 Perrault and Laviolette at Crow Wing River; Harris on Nemadji River; Alex Reaume at Whitefish Lake (off Pine River);
- 1792-93 Perrault at White Oak Point; 3 unnamed traders also at White Oak Point; Morachon at Sandy Lake;
- 1793-94 Perrault built Ft. St. Louis for Sayer and NWCo; probably were other traders in the interior
- 1794-95 Perrault at Red Cedar Lake (Cass Lake); J.B. Cadotte (NWCo) was at Red Lake; Vincent Roy (NWCo) was at Thief River; Bousquet (NWCo) was at Sandy Lake; LeBrun (NWCo?) was on St. Louis River.
- 1795-96 Perrault at Red Cedar Lake; Bousquet at Sandy Lake (had summered over); L'etang traded in opposition near Red Cedar Lake; Michel Cadotte sr, Michel Cadotte, jr, Alexander Henry, jr were in area, too.
- 1796-97 Perrault at Red Cedar Lake (had left 2 men over the summer; from here he was trading with Indians at Leech and Bowstring lakes); Cadotte at Red Lake; Roy opposed L'etang at Thief River; LeBrun was on St. Louis River; Bousquet was at Sandy Lake; there was a non-NWCo trader named Machard outfitted by L'etang trading at Bowstring.
- 1797-98 Perrault at Red Cedar Lake; Cadotte at Wild Rice Lake; L'etang in opposition on Red River above fork with Thief River; Sayer at Ft. St. Louis.
- 1798-99 Perrault at Red Cedar Lake; Roy (NWCo) at Pembina River; L'etang in opposition; Sayer ordered by NWCo to replace Cadotte who was a drunk - Sayer ended up at Red Cedar Lake, Perrault went to Clearwater River to replace Cadotte (who stayed on under Perrault).

Our "rendezvous" is actually a gathering of the various minor posts in the area for the trip to Ft. St. Louis and then on to the annual company rendezvous at Grand Portage. There we deliver the furs and pick up trade goods for our post.

The NWCo is in competition not only with the HBC at this time, but also with the recently formed XY Company (not sure if L'entang, mentioned by Perrault, is XY or independent). However, the NWCo is the dominant entity controlling approximately 75% of the fur trade in British North America.

White Oak Fur Post

Components of the fur post site and suggestions on interpretation:

Smoke house: The smoke house is used to cure meat and fish. It's built outside of the post in the event the house catches fire. Voyageurs at the post do some of the hunting and fishing, but there is also considerable trade with the Ojibwa to provide fish and game. A retired voyageur living in the area might also provide game and fish in trade for supplies.

Blacksmith shop: White Oak's blacksmith shop is a copy of the shop at Forts Folle Avoine along the Yellow River in northern Wisconsin. A smith this far in the interior is primarily engaged in repairing items that are broken as opposed to manufacturing goods for the trade (trade goods come from Europe). As a craftsman, the smith ranks above the voyageurs in pay and status. He would likely paddle as a member of the mileaux but be paid more than the bouts (avant and gouvernail).

First Winter cabin: This rude hut was the original trading building constructed the first year the post was being established; it would have taken about 10-14 days to construct. The post's clerk would have lived in it; trade goods and furs would have been stored inside as well. The voyageurs would have lived in tents or even cruder, temporary structures. Once the post was built, the cabin became the home of Broken Toe, the post's cook; voyageurs probably also stay here during cold weather.

Canoe Shed: Most of the canoes used by the Company were made by its own men. On occasion, traveling brigades would trade for canoes especially if one of their own had been damaged or lost. Two sizes of canoes are built here - 26 foot north canoes (freight) and smaller express or passenger canoes. As a craftsman, the canoe builder ranks above the voyageurs in pay and status. He would likely paddle as a member of the mileaux but be paid more than the bouts.

Company store: This is the heart of the post. Much of the post's trading occurs in or near the store. Trade goods are stored here as are the furs. The bulk of the goods are for trade with the Ojibwa; the voyageurs would also trade for goods (with furs they or their Indian families trapped) and acquire goods on credit. The clerks have their quarters in the store. Indians can walk freely into the store as can the craftsmen; voyageurs should seek permission to enter unless on business for the clerk. As a larger post, White Oak usually has a senior clerk, a junior clerk, and an assistant clerk. If left in charge of the post, the senior clerk would be known as a commis (co-mee).

Bourgeois' quarters: Although collectively all clerks and partners are called the bourgeois by the voyageurs, the resident wintering partner is also accorded this title by himself. This structure is the home of White Oak's "boss". It is the only structure on site with glass. He would host the heads of major trading parties of Ojibwa in his quarters as well as visiting clerks and partners from other posts. Voyageur guides and interpreters, and the craftsmen would be invited to dine at his table on occasion. Common voyageurs would not be allowed inside except upon errands. During rendezvous a visiting Montreal agent might be staying at the quarters as well.

Bake oven: Fresh bread for the post is baked in the outside clay oven. It is kept outside to prevent fire from burning a building and because of the tremendous amount of heat it generates. The covering protects the clay from the erosive effects of rain and snow (there are

records of similar ovens in eastern Canada surviving into the modern era; the ovens had baked all the way through and thus the clay was essentially brick).

Garden: A significant part of the post's food supply was grown in the post garden. Potatoes, beans and root crops were the main vegetables produced. These crops were important to balancing out the game/fish dominated diet of the post, especially during the long winters. White Oak's garden is under the direction of Rowena, but voyageurs would routinely do much of the soil preparation and weeding.

Pillory: The pillory is intended to mete out punishment to wayward voyageurs.

Fur press: The press is used to compact furs into bales or pieces for transport to Montreal. As a point of fact, there was not a fixed weight to bales (that is, not all pieces weighed 90 pounds). Each post would establish its own weight, perhaps just for a given season (*The English River Book* notes that pieces coming from those posts in 1786 weighed 88 pounds). We use 90 pounds as our standard.

Voyageur camp: In actuality, a post like White Oak would have a cabin inside the palisade for the resident voyageurs and their Ojibwa wives and children; during rendezvous any visiting brigades would probably stay outside the post. Ours has burned or collapsed so we are without for the time being; it will be replaced once the busy rendezvous is over. In the meantime, the voyageurs are camped outside the post.

Ojibwa camp: During rendezvous, the local Ojibwa set up a temporary camp near the post down by the Eratz. We use the camp as the site for presenting Ojibwa culture. We aim to present Ojibwa culture according to the season. In winter - trapping, story telling, games, tool making, crafts. In spring - maple sugar, village construction, canoe building, herb collecting, planting, fishing. In summer - berry picking, fishing and hunting, gardening, games, herb and medicine collecting. In fall - harvest, food storage and preparation, wild rice gathering, drum making.

Eratz River: Ah, the lovely Eratz, our connection to the outside world. Rivers are the highways of the era. The Eratz flows from the west to the east where it enters the Deer River and from there to the Mississippi which is roughly two miles to the south. Going up (west) the Eratz will take you to a portage that goes to Ball Club lake; from there one travels the Mississippi to Lake Winnibigoshish, through the Cutfoot Sioux narrows, across the Turtle portage to Inger on the channel connecting Bowstring Lake northward to Sand Lake, Little Sand Lake, Rice Lake and down the river to Doar Lake where the Bigfork River begins its flow north to the Rainy River which is the main east-west voyageur route.

The route to Ft. St. Louis is: down the Eratz to the Deer River, to the Mississippi; down the Mississippi to Sandy River which is taken into and across Sandy Lake; the Prairie River and then the Western Savanna River; cross the Savanna Portage to the Eastern Savanna River, to the St. Louis River; down the St. Louis via the Knife Falls portage and the Grand Portage (of the St. Louis), to the estuary and then to the fort. A schooner, the Otter, delivers and picks up goods/furs, although canoes also goods and furs from and to Grand Portage.

Fur Trade Society and Roles

While all the characters interpreted at the post are distinct individuals, there are general conventions regarding presentation of the character that should be kept in mind. The following overview helps set the stage for interpreting the characters. Additional information on interpreting can be found in Appendix J and, of course, there are any number of materials on interpreting specific classes of people and the era in White Oak's library and other sources.

The following discussion is freely lifted from *Old Fort William At a Glance: A Thematic Guide to Old Fort William Structures and their Functions* (a guide for OFW interpreters) and modified for White Oak's use.

Fur Trade Society

"Each summer, the Rendezvous reflected the complex interdependent relationships of the various peoples upon whom the fur trade revolved, the Scots, the French Canadians, and the Indians predominating. These three groups roughly paralleled the three basic social divisions within the fur trade: the merchant-traders, the voyageur-laborers, and the hunter-trappers. This correlation was not precise, though. Some Scots were laborers; some natives were voyageurs; some French Canadians were traders."

The Merchant-Traders or Managerial Class

"Mostly Scots, the managerial class itself was divided into three main groups. The Montreal Agents who held the controlling interest in the firm arranged for the importing and transportation of trade goods and for the marketing of the furs. The Wintering Partners commanded the inland departments, while the Clerks kept the records and managed the lesser posts." Collectively, they were called the 'bourgeois' by the French Canadians.

"The role of the wintering partner in the North West Company is perhaps the secret to its spectacular success....Instead of salaried servants managing the trade, as was the case with the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company's wintering partners received one or two shares in return for their services; they also had the right to attend the annual meeting at Grand Portage and vote on the basis of one vote to one share."

"No one could become a wintering partner without first serving as a clerk in the interior.... All clerks served an apprenticeship of five to seven years. If not voted to full partnership after this period, they could continue with the company as clerks until such time as they might become partners."

The Engagés or Laborers

"The French Canadians employed by the North West Company generally performed most of the labor necessary for the functioning of the fur trade. These were the engagés, the term derived from the contract or engagement each had with the Company. (The exceptions to this should be noted. Not all French Canadians in the fur trade were engagés; some became clerks, and a very few were partners. On the other hand, not all engagés were French Canadian; a small number were British, Indian, or of other national origins.

The vast majority of engagés were voyageurs, the labor forces which powered the canoes and carried trade goods and furs over countless portages. The Montreal canoe carried eight to ten men called mangeurs de lard (porkeaters), hired for the Montreal-Grand Portage and return trip. The North canoes carried five to six men known as hivernants (winterers) or hommes des nord (northmen), who brought the canoes from the Company's posts to Grand Portage and back." While at Grand Portage (or later at Fort William), all voyageurs, except guides and interpreters, would stay and sleep outside the palisade. However, at inland posts, the voyageurs lived within the confines of the post.

There was a "strict hierarchal structure based on position occupied in the canoe, which again was based on experience and skill. The lowest position was that of the milieu (middleman) [although some members of the milieu might be craftsmen]; then came the gouvernail at the stern (steersman); captaining the canoe was the avant or devant in the bow. The highest ranking of all was the guide who headed the brigade, a group of three or more canoes."

Tradesmen/Craftsmen

"Although a few tradesmen had Scottish names and spoke English, most were French Canadian. Drawn mostly from the suburbs of Montreal and Quebec, they received a little less pay than the guides, who ranked highest amongst the engagés. The tradesmen's wages ranged from several hundred livres a year for the carpenter to one thousand for the blacksmith, about what a guide received. (As the French Canadians preferred the former currency of New France, the North West Company adopted the livre as the standard of exchange for paying engagés, even though

no actual coinage in this currency existed.).

The Natives

"The fur trade would not have been possible without the native people, whose technology provided the birch bark canoe, the moccasin and snowshoe, and whose skills included trapping, hunting, harvesting, fishing and guiding. It was European technology, however, which motivated the Indian to provide this labor. The great appeal which European goods had for the native was reflected in the vast range of trade items at the post." The Ojibwa were considered among the premier trappers in the north west. They traded furs, maple sugar, wild rice, game and fish for manufactured goods.

The Free Canadians and the Métis

"Over a period of time another group emerged. Many engagés preferred not to return to Lower Canada when their contracts expired. They stayed in the North West, becoming known as 'free' Canadians. Through intermarriage with the natives, they created a growing population of persons with 'mixed blood'. These persons were called the bois-brulés ('burnt wood', from the color of their skin) or the métis." Free Canadians or métis would often provide contract labor at a post. It seems that the term "metis" applies to offspring of French-Canadians (or Roman Catholics) and Indians while the term "mixed blood" came to be used for the offspring of the Protestant English/Scots and Indians. The term "half-breed" was used extensively, but probably should be restricted considering its highly pejorative connotation.

Women's Roles

Strictly speaking, an interior post would have only Indian and métis women present. Many of these women would be married to post personnel. Others would belong to the local Ojibwa band. Those directly associated with the post would tend to wear European style clothing and have European names. The métis women play the parts of cook, baker, gardener and, as occasion merits, as wives of the voyageurs, bourgeois or clerks. They would be doing much heavy work although they enjoyed the privileges that came with their marriages or association with the post and they could anticipate that their male children would likely be sent back east for an education and come back as clerks.

At White Oak, we play a little loose with the rules in as much as we have European women present acting as the Eastern wives of the bourgeois.

Costumes and Historic Appearance

"As a result of Old Fort William's research, many misconceptions about how people in the fur trade looked are being dispelled. Officers in the fur trade – agents, partners and clerks – dressed as gentlemen in Montreal or London, the agents most elegantly of all, with partners and clerks much like merchants and office staff elsewhere. Voyageurs wore the clothing of the French Canadian habitant with certain refinements related to the hierarchical structure of the canoe brigades. While buckskin trousers were sometimes worn, especially in the west, at Fort William [Grand Portage] cloth prevailed.

The natives also preferred cloth to leather and furs, and their dress combined Indian and European styles. Paintings of the period often depict native men in blue and red leggings, loin cloths, and buffalo robes or blanket coats. Their chiefs are seen bedecked in red military great coats and feathered beaver top hats. Native women typically wore shoulder-strapped gowns of blue, separate sleeves, and leggings, all elaborately decorated with ribbons and laces, while blankets or shawls served for coats. Those native and métis women attached to fur traders dressed in the European fashion of the day."

"The clean-shaven look was almost universal; most gentlemen kept their hair fashionably short; voyageurs wore their somewhat longer. Just before arriving at Grand Portage, canoe brigades stopped to allow passengers and crew to shave and 'spruce up'. The unkempt, bearded frontiersman image given fur traders by twentieth century fiction is a fiction. The hallmark of

Nor'Westers, gentlemen and voyageurs alike, as well as their native customers, was fashionable elegance."

The Odd Ones

During rendezvous there are often camps located around the post that are historically accurate but misplaced in time. The camps add color and activity but integrating them accurately into the White Oak scenario can be tricky.

We are opting to let these camps interpret their era (most tend to be pre-1763 although some may be 1815-1821). When we interact with them, we will note to the tourists that these poor misguided folks don't know what year it is and casually present information on the group's era, etc. Maybe use a bit of humor as well. And, then just carry on as if all is normal.

Among the groups that fall into this category and are likely to be present are the French Marines and Rogers Rangers.

Notes on Interpretation

This is a growing list of points to keep in mind when interpreting the post for 1798.

1. Voyageurs do not cry out "viva la France". This would have been considered high treason at the time. Exception can be made when the French Marines do a drill, etc. since their time era is pre-conquest.
2. The French and Indians will not attempt to capture the post. This is not appropriate for the 1798 era.
3. Gentlemen always refer to each other as "Mr. so-and-so".
4. Voyageurs ask permission to enter the Company Store or the Bourgeois' quarters. Indians do not have to ask permission.
5. The term "Canada" only refers to the area along the St. Lawrence River near Quebec. The bulk of the fur trade country is referred to as "the Northwest" or the high country (pays d'haut).
- 6.

Discussion Topics

A number of interpretation points need further discussion as to our presentation. This is an ongoing list:

Canoe Route: Ft. St. Louis at Fond du Lac (modern day Superior, Wi) is our main supply depot. Our goods and furs went through there although there is evidence that the interior brigades would have traveled to Grand Portage with furs, returning with trade goods. We should probably interpret things this way so we can introduce Grand Portage into our interpretation.

We need to research the location, dates of operation, and related information regarding the various posts within the Fond du Lac District.

Voyageurs in the Post: In the past we had presented the situation being that voyageurs were not allowed inside the post (one reason the palisade is there is to control voyageur access to goods). This seems, however, to be based on the actual circumstances at Grand Portage and Fort William where the one thousand plus transient voyageurs needed to be controlled in this manner. However, descriptions of Lac la Pluie, Big Sandy, Leech Lake, Fort St. Louis and the reconstructions at Pine City and Folle Avoine clearly indicate that the men of a post lived in buildings within the palisade. Thus, at White Oak, we now indicate that the voyageurs would usually be in the post and have relatively free access to the grounds (but still would likely need permission to enter such buildings as the Company Store and bourgeois' quarters).

We need to consider the construction of the Voyageur House to properly place the voyageurs in the post. In the meantime, we can say that the building is being built.

Sayer is Wintering Partner: The only wintering partner in the district was John Sayer located at Ft. St. Louis. He probably traveled from post to post during the year. White Oak would have been run by the senior clerk. We need to determine how we want to handle the presence of a wintering partner other than Sayer.

If Dad's Tavern moves: If Dad's Tavern is moved to near this cabin, the interpretation can change for both. Dad's could be interpreted as the original storehouse and clerk's quarters while the other cabin can be interpreted as the voyageur's quarters. Once the post was built, both became quarters for the camp cook and "free Canadians" or metis working for the Company.

Eastern Wives: The whole issue of "eastern wives" was brought up at the 1999 rendezvous by one of the interpreters. It was noted that the clerks and partners did not marry prior to leaving for the north west—many were in their teens at the time. Most, if not all, would have married Indian or metis women and some would bring these wives back East when they retired. Others would marry upon their return. One option to consider is to drop any mention of eastern wives but still have white women in eastern dress (and perhaps referred to as someone's wife) during the rendezvous.

Non-voyageurish interpreters: There are a number of interpreters who dress more like courier des bois or long hunters. We could consider interpreting them as Free Canadians, former voyageurs.

Relations with Indians: We interpret our relations with the Ojibwe as friendly, business oriented, and mixed with marriages. Perrault's narrative of these years notes a fear of the Sioux (Dakota) when traveling on the edge of the forest/prairie in the area around modern day Clearwater County. The fear was based on the warring between the Dakota and Ojibwe and the fact that the traders were trading with the Ojibwe and not the Dakota.

Possible Skits / Activities

In addition to the usual mix of one-on-one interpretation (you and a tourist), station interpretation (e.g., Louis explaining building a canoe), and madcap improvisation, there are a number of activities we would like to undertake either scheduled or as the spirit moves us. The following identifies likely skits that can be executed without significant scripting beyond a key role or two.

Cannon firing	The cannon at the wharf is fired at more or less regular intervals during the event in order to draw folks to the post area. It is also fired when brigades or Ojibwa arrive or leave. The cannon is to be fired only when a White Oak chief gunner is present (currently: John Kavanagh-Beltman, John Powers or Ray Nyberg). Proper cannon firing procedures are followed (we use F&I procedures). Highly interactive with crowd - youth and the occasional adult are recruited to join the crew. Consider having the voyageurs ask permission from the bourgeois or clerk to fire the cannon each time. Keep the ram rod, etc by the cannon, but the gear bag (pierce, vent cleaner, etc.) and cartouches in the Company Store. Roughly scheduled - 2-3 times per hour.
Voyageur contract signing	The bourgeois directs the clerks to sign up voyageurs for another three year engagement. Use stock contracts which only require filling in a few blanks. Do outside in the post yard with a camp table or some such. Have enough blank contracts so tourists can also sign on; have some of the tourists sign up before all the voyageurs do. If the crowd is right, lead the new recruits down to the voyageur camp for some lessons in being a voyageur. Fire a cannon volley to honor the signings. Scheduled (in that we should do this both days).
Steal the bread/turnovers	A White Oak tradition. Can happen any time, but usually on Sunday near

the end of rendezvous. Voyageurs conspire with the aid of whoever might be around, to adroitly steal bread or turnovers from the baker. Outright theft is not allowed - artistic and theatrical quality is a must. Any can pull this off, but try to include the entire voyageur camp in the scenario. Presence of tourists is nice but not required - this is first and foremost an activity for the enjoyment of the interpreters. Definitely unscheduled.

Lacrosse game

If we have enough raquettes, call out the challenge for a lacrosse game - around the post and in the encampment. Layout the playing area between post and the Ersatz. Erect two bent saplings as goals about 150-200 feet apart. Basic rules - if ball goes into a camp or into the crowd, time out, ball goes to side that didn't lob it there; keep the sticks below the shoulders, especially when tossing the ball. Play until you drop. Have several containers of drinking water on hand - force players to drink, especially on a hot day. Crowd does NOT participate in the game - for safety and to insure a "period" look to the game; but tourists should be involved in warm ups, practice after the game, or during a "half time" while the players take a breather. Unscheduled but try to have on both days.

Brigade arrival

One or two canoes are taken upstream on the Ersatz and hidden from sight of the wharf. Two voyageurs per canoe and a clerk go up there. After a few minutes, the voyageurs at the wharf talk to the crowd about the expected arrival of the lead canoes of a brigade. With a gun shot, the brigade begins to come down river. The wharf voyageurs quickly load and fire the cannon - no tourists are involved - make sure the cannon is aimed down stream. Much yelling, maybe a feu de joie of gun fire as well. Make a big point of sending 1-2 tourist kids up to the post to get Mr. Edwards or Mr. Kavanagh. Ease the canoes to the wharf. Edwards or a clerk will come down from the post, beverages in hand, to welcome the incoming clerk. Party proceeds to the post where the bourgeois can exchange news, etc. Scheduled for both days.

Brigade departure

The reverse of the arrival skit. Can either send canoes up stream back to the North West or down stream on their way to Grand Portage. Send a clerk along. Could only be one canoe - an express - if need be. Fire the cannon and/or a feu de joie as they depart.

Another version. Just have voyageurs leaving to see if any brigades are coming - or to visit a nearby Ojibwa village - or to go fishing or hunting.

Unscheduled

Arrival/departure of Ojibwa party

Works the same way as the brigade arrival and departure. Possible scenarios: Ojibwa are going/coming from a visit with relatives in a nearby camp; if we have male interpreters, then arriving to begin negotiating next season's gear/supplies for trapping (in this event, a clerk would come down to the wharf or meet the Ojibwa as he walked up to the post). Unscheduled

Paddle dance

When a musician is around and there is an adequate crowd, a paddle dance can be organized. Drag the folks to join the dance. Use the opportunity to inform folks that the life of a voyageur was rugged and hard; when we had the occasion to celebrate, we'd sing and dance. Dance has no basic steps. Two lines are formed - one male, one female. A female holds a paddle at the head of the lines - two males step forward making the cases as worthy partners - she selects one, hands the paddle

to the other, and dances down the lines with her partner. Then the jilted man starts the process with two women stepping forward. Continue until the musicians quit or the crowd starts to dissipate. Thank everyone.
Unscheduled.

Letter from home Voyageur receives letter, cannot read of course. Looks for someone to read the letter to him. Choose a tourist. Gather a crowd, have voyageurs present. Read the letter with all appropriate ups and downs of emotion. At the end, the voyageurs commiserate with the letter's recipient as they all straggle back to the camp or go their different directions.
Unscheduled (can happen a couple times a day)

Fight - man to the pillory Two voyageurs start fighting over whatever (whoever these two, they set their own ground rules on level of realism, will any clothing be ripped, etc.). The others, after enjoying a period of betting and kibitzing at the expense of the two combatants, separate them and haul them up to the post. There the senior bourgeois present hears the dispute - probably with the two combatants launching back into battle again - and resolves it with one man going to the pillory and the other to work in the garden or haul wood. The man in pillory is soon released after much joking, pleading for leniency by the other voyageurs, etc.
Unscheduled

Agent / wintering partner dispute Starting inside the bourgeois quarters and then quickly moving out into the post yard, the winter partner and agent get into a dispute over which has the most important role in the Company. While always maintaining proper gentlemanly decorum, the two present their cases to the assembled crowd; the crowd can be asked to voice its opinion on the matter. The senior clerk, if present, should at an appropriate time appear and find a way to mollify the two so the dispute ends in fully friendly terms. If the clerk is not present, the gentlemen should find a voyageur upon whom they can jointly vent and thus end on common grounds.
Unscheduled

Testing out a canoe Essentially this transfers Louis' canoe building spiel from the canoe shed to the Ersatz. At an appropriate time, Louis has a couple voyageurs haul a canoe from the shed area down to the Ersatz. While the canoe absorbs water, Louis gives his routine on canoe building, difference in canoe sizes, paddle types, etc. Any voyageurs in the area can chime in with testimonials to Louis' skill, portaging a canoe, a story or two. When the canoe is ready, Louis and/or voyageurs take it out for test run. When back, the canoe is pronounced fit for use.
Unscheduled

Voyageur contest Several voyageurs around the camp start boasting about who is the greatest in the world. Eventually this leads to a challenge of a test of skills. The group move up to the post so Kavanagh or Edwards can "referee". The group is divided into "brigades" to which willing tourists can/should be added. Among the tests that can be used: fire starting, carry a pack, cat and mouse, wrestling, maybe even some fur trade trivia. Use the tourists in parts where they cannot get hurt (e.g., no tourist carries a 90# pack). Winner is whoever it is but all ends in harmony - fire the cannon in honor of the winning brigade (losing brigade gets to fire it - especially good if tourists are on the brigades).
Unscheduled

The XY Co Traitor A partner accuses Mr. Bybee of being an agent of the XY Co. The basis for the accusation is a letter, somewhat smudged by water, from Simon MacTavish himself. Bybee is hauled out into the post yard, lots of

commotion, accusations, explanations for the crowd's benefit, etc. Mr. Kavanagh quietly reads the letter - then notes that the smudged name is Bugbee, not Bybee. Apologies all around, mutterings, etc. Mr. Bybee is treated to a dram in the bourgeois' quarters.
Unscheduled

Voyageur shaving

One voyageur undertakes to shave another with a straight edge razor. The two voyageurs use dialogue to inform the audience that there had been a minor dispute between the two regarding a young woman. As the shaving proceeds, the barber uses his undisputed leverage to slowly extract concessions from the other. By the end of the shave the one has a smooth shave and the other has the affections of the young woman.
Unscheduled.