



Fort St. James National Historic Site of Canada



*A view of the Fort, showing the
Fur Warehouse in the foreground and the
modern Nak'azdli village in the background.*

We value your comments and suggestions. Your input is a vital part of our program development.

Please take a moment to fill in a visitor comment card and sign our guest book located in the Visitor Reception Centre.

Fort St James National
Historic Site

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Each National Park, National Historic Site and Canal, including conservation areas within in the Parks Canada family tells a very unique story...

“Long ago, they never go by thermometer; they just go by animals. That’s what they used to do. The beavers come out in the spring; this is when they come out. Sometimes, if they were seen to open their dams wide, it would mean that it would be a wet summer. But if they don’t open their dams, and the beaver fixes the dam right away, it meant that it would be a dry summer. Things like that, the old people watched out for. And in the late fall, if the beaver gathered its food early, it meant a cold winter ahead or a long winter.”

*Nak’azdli Elder, Betsy Leon
from “Nak’azdli Elders Speak”*

Long before Alexander Mackenzie came west of the Rocky Mountains in search of a navigable route to the Pacific Ocean, the Nak’azdli had their home here. Part of the Dakelh or Carrier people, the Nak’azdli nation depended mainly on the salmon for sustenance over the long winters. It was in their territory that Simon Fraser built the first trading post, Stuart Lake Outpost, in 1806. The post formed an important part of the North West Company’s expansion west of the Rocky Mountains.

Simon Fraser, John Stuart and those that accompanied them, found this area rich in all kinds of fur-bearing animals. Once established, the post became an important trading place for the Dakelh.

Stuart Lake Outpost was renamed Fort St. James in 1821 with the amalgamation of the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company. What you see is the fourth building phase of the Fort in its original location. As a place for trade, the post was alive and active until 1952.

Today, local natural resources are still used for the lively-hood of the economy, whether in a traditional or modern sense. The Dakelh and others hunt, fish, pick berries, etc. to help sustain themselves over the winter months. And many people find work in the forestry and tourism industries.

Costumed historic interpreters are on site to share the history of the fort and surrounding area from June 1st to September 30th.

Historic buildings will be closed from 12:00 pm to 12:45 pm. During this time, we invite you to join one of our interpreters in the Hide Tanning Shed for a special program.



Historic Buildings

General Warehouse and Fur Store (1888-1889) (#1)

The warehouse housed the trade goods for Fort St. James and the surrounding outposts. Furs were stored in this building where they were baled for their journey to Victoria. The warehouse is one of the finest surviving examples of a Red River frame fur trade building in Canada.

Fish Cache (1889) (#2)

Dried salmon and bacon were stored here for the use of company employees and the Carrier people. An adaptation of the traditional Carrier fish cache, the building is raised by four corner posts to deter predators.

Men's House (1884) (#3)

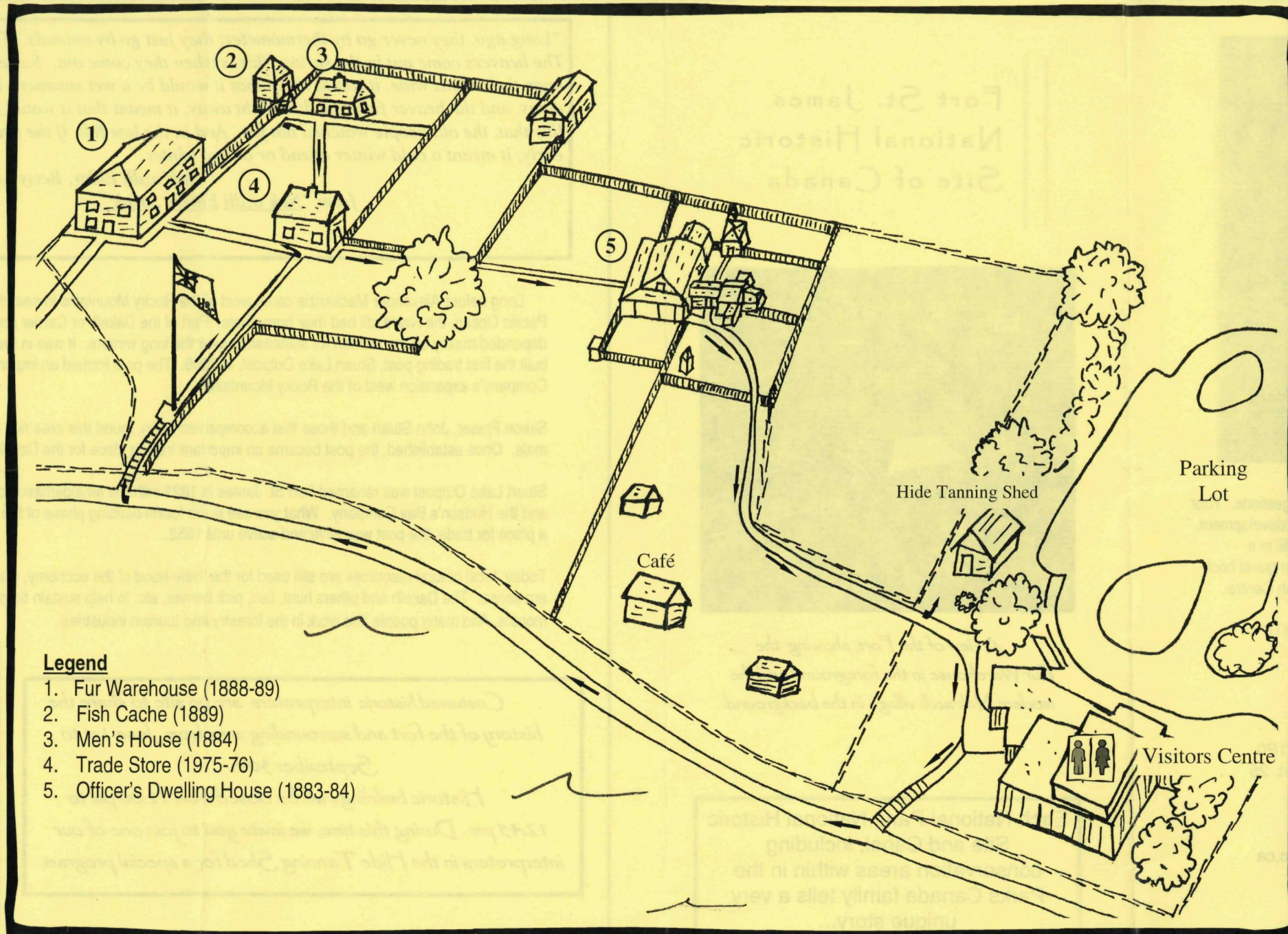
The men's house served as a residence for company employees, pack train hands, boat crews and visitors. The building also served as an early schoolhouse in the area and as a private residence in the 1930's and 1940's.

Trade Store and Office (1884) (#4)

This was the commercial centre of the post where furs were traded for many goods displayed inside. The building also served as the first post office in the area until fire destroyed it in 1919. The building that stands today is an authentic reconstruction to the 1896 period.

Murray House (#5) (1883 -1884)

This house was the residence for the factor in charge of the post. Although it underwent many changes over the years, it has been restored to the period of A.C. Murray's occupancy in 1896.



Legend

1. Fur Warehouse (1888-89)
2. Fish Cache (1889)
3. Men's House (1884)
4. Trade Store (1975-76)
5. Officer's Dwelling House (1883-84)

Other Historic Features

Dairy (1884)

The dairy served as a storage building for milk and cheese and as a general service building for the main house

Chicken Yard

Chickens were kept as a source of eggs and meat for the residence of the house. Other livestock at the post included dairy and beef cattle as well as horses and mules for transport.

Fences

The reconstructed fences and platforms (or boardwalks) were originally constructed between 1887 and 1889. Large rail fences separated the post from the surrounding area. Picket fences and platforms connected the buildings and separated the gardens.

Wharf and Tramway (1894-1914)

During the 1890's sailing sloops carried goods on Stuart Lake to Fort St. James and took furs away. Cargo unloaded at the wharf was put on a small miner's car and hauled up the tramway to the General Warehouse

Gardens and Fields

Today's landscape recreates the appearance of the post in the 1890's. Inhabitants of the post depended on the produce of the garden and fields to supplement their monotonous diet of dried salmon.

Grahame Warehouse

The original warehouse served as a storage space for harnesses and sleds. This reconstructed building is the site maintenance shed and is not open to the public

Demonstration Area

During special events, site staff and Nak'azdli Elders demonstrate the traditional activities of the summer villages and interpret the role of the Carrier people.