



Commemorative Intent Statement

York Factory is commemorated for its critical role in the French-English struggle on Hudson Bay for control of the fur trade, as an important Hudson's Bay Company trading post and entrepôt (*see definition below) for over two and one half centuries, and for its role in the expansion of the fur trade into the interior of western Canada.

The following are essential to an understanding of the national significance of York Factory: the importance of the fur trade in Canadian history, the international dimensions of the trade, and the interaction of aboriginal peoples and their trading partners at York Factory, was integral to the role of the site.

The site is comprised of 102 hectares of land on which the most prominent feature is the Hudson's Bay Company's Depot building. The main location of cultural resources (i.e. around the Depot) is cleared of willow and other encroaching vegetation. The remainder of the site is marsh and boreal/taiga forest cover.

York Factory served for almost two centuries as a major administrative, transshipment and manufacturing centre within the fur-trade network. Successive generations of structures existed near or on this site, as control of the area shifted between the French and English. The current site, known as York Factory III, was developed after 1788. After 1850, the post diminished in importance and was abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1957. Ownership was transferred to the Government of Canada in 1968.

York Factory is located near the mouth of the Hayes River approximately 250 kilometres southeast of Churchill. Its location on the Hayes River near Hudson Bay, and with access to the Nelson River, was a deliberate choice on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company. This location was accessible by ocean-going vessels, which would anchor at Five Fathom Hole, and provided safe harbour. From here goods were transferred to York Factory and smaller boats for inland trade via navigable rivers.



York Factory gardens

The establishment of York Factory provided the HBC with access to good quality furs of the hinterland and existing aboriginal trade networks. There were actually three York Factories in the same area over the years. Its current location (i.e. York Factory III) near the mouth of Hayes River was influenced by York Factory I (1684-1715) and II (1715-88) which were located about 1 km downstream. Joseph Colen selected this high piece of land upstream from York Factory II after spring flooding in 1788.

The location on the north side of the Hayes River also had potable water, and the channels of the river here provided boat access. (Dramatic and ongoing erosion of the Hayes riverbank has substantially reduced the distance between the river and the heart of York Factory III.) Erosion of the north bank of the Hayes River has meant that these two earlier York Factories have completely disappeared.

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