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The Archaeology of the North American Fur Trade (American Experience in Archaeological Perspective)

By Michael S. Nassaney



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“Nassaney draws together an amazing amount of information about the fur trades that once existed in North America and includes illuminating and imaginative interpretations of archaeological data by researchers from across the continent.”—Gregory A. Waselkov, author of *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813–1814*

“*The Archaeology of the North American Fur Trade* demonstrates how an amazing number of issues constellate around the subject: the mutual effects of cultural interaction, colonialism, world-systems theory, questions about dependence and local autonomy, consumer motivations, substantivism and formalism, creolization, underwater archaeology, gender, the politics of heritage and commemoration, indigenous perspectives, and present-day ramifications.”—Kurt A. Jordan, author of *The Seneca Restoration, 1715–1754*

“Provides new means to interpret and enhance existing fur trade sites and parks and to discover and evaluate sites that should be preserved.”—Douglas C. Wilson, historical archaeologist for the National Park Service

The North American fur trade left an enduring material legacy of the complex interactions between natives and Europeans. From the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, the demand for pelts and skins transformed America, helping to fuel the Age of Discovery and, later, Manifest Destiny.

By synthesizing its social, economic, and ideological effects, Michael Nassaney reveals how this extractive economy impacted the settlement and exploitation of North America. Examinations of the objects made, used, and discarded in the course of the fur trade provide insight into the relationships between participants and their lifeways. Furthermore, Nassaney shows how the ways in which exchange was conducted, resisted, and transformed to suit various needs left an indelible imprint upon the American psyche, particularly in the way the fur trade has been remembered and commemorated.

Including research from historical archaeologists and a case study of the Fort St. Joseph trading post in Michigan, this innovative work highlights the fur trade’s

role in the settlement of the continent, its impact on social relations, and how its study can lead to a better understanding of the American experience.

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About the Author

Michael S. Nassaney, professor of anthropology at Western Michigan University, is coeditor of *Interpretations of Native North American Life*.

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