

HBCA Information Sheet: “Miscellaneous” Post Record Series

A number of record series of fur trade posts have the word “miscellaneous” in their title. Why is that?

In the 1920s, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives developed a series classification scheme. In this scheme, post records were divided into series. The main series were post journals, correspondence books, inward correspondence, account books and reports, as well as others. Miscellaneous series were created for documents that did not fit into these categories.

The majority of “miscellaneous” records series were comprised of loose accounting records and records of the transportation of furs and supplies. These include servants' accounts, packing accounts, bills of lading, indents, requisitions, packet lists and fur returns. Miscellaneous series also contained records that fell outside of the Hudson's Bay Company's usual business matters such as marriage certificates, legal agreements, medical certificates and private correspondence. There are also some censuses of the Aboriginal and European populations at various posts. Many of these records may have been connected originally to records in other series, but their context of creation has been lost.

In the new description scheme, many records from the former miscellaneous series have been divided into their own series. For example, if a miscellaneous series had a significant amount of bills of lading, packing accounts and requisitions, three series may have been created for each type of record. However, many series have remained entitled “miscellaneous.” This is usually the case in series that are comprised of a variety or small amount of records. For example, if a miscellaneous series contained one marriage certificate, three servants accounts and five bills of lading, the series would remain intact as one series. Within the series descriptions, former miscellaneous series have been noted.