

Fur Trade

"The fur trade era with the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara was the motive for much of the early exploration of the frontier. It was also a prime factor in the destruction of their traditional cultures. The trade in the Upper Missouri became highly competitive, and in their quest for profits, corrupt traders resorted to the most brazen forms of deceit and trickery. Most harmful was the unrestrained use of whiskey in trading with the Indians, who were physically and spiritually defenseless to alcohol. Little regard was shown for the Indians' welfare by the fur companies, but the damage could not have been nearly so devastating had it not been for the cooperation of the Indian agents of the United States government. The crime of traders, politicians, and other exploiters during this era, was that not only did they steal the Indians' land, they crushed their spirit and destroyed their cultures. " (Dunn, 1963, p.235).