

the small towns enjoy electrical service, but most of the farm homes including many Indian homes on the reservation are able and do take advantage of it at rates well below those elsewhere in Montana. The Company pays the Flathead tribe a substantial sum of money each year for rental of the power site. This rental is fixed by the Federal Power Commission in their license to the Montana Power Company. The money goes into the United States Treasury to the credit of the tribe and is subject to appropriation by Congress for their benefit.

-- Historical Background --

For about 100 years before the government made its treaty with the Flatheads (Hell Gate Treaty 1855) the Hudson Bay Fur Company and, a little later (1784), the Northwest Fur Company began to exert an influence on the Flathead Indians. These companies, in trading for furs among the Plains Indians farther east, furnished many firearms. Hence, when the Blackfeet made raids on the Flatheads to obtain horses they had a great advantage because of their firearms received from the fur companies. In self-defense the Flatheads were forced to recognize the necessity of making contact with the fur trading posts. Prior to the year 1800, these contacts were infrequent. In that year David Thompson, an agent of the Northwest Company for whom the city of Thompson Falls is named, guided the first party to "Rocky Mountain House." (Near the Canadian line east of the Rockies). But from this time on more frequent contacts were made in spite of the resistance from other tribes, and more and more trading took place for guns, ammunition, tobacco, fish hooks, knives, axes, and such other articles as the Flatheads could obtain from the trading posts.

It may be noted at this point that a party of Flatheads on their way to the Three Forks Country to join the Shoshone in Bison hunting met with members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805. The meeting was brief and friendly and the expedition obtained knowledge from them of the country west of the Rocky Mountain Divide.

With increasing competition between the two British Fur Companies, the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company, it became necessary to open up new fields. This task was undertaken by a group of able men representing the Northwest Company. David Thompson, who is mentioned above, was perhaps the most notable among them.

In 1809, Thompson established Kullyspel House on Lake Pend d' Oreille and the first Saleesh House near the present site of Thompson Falls, Montana. These posts henceforth offered trading facilities to the Flathead Indians.

The Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company merged in 1821 under the old name of the Hudson Bay Company. They abandoned their policy of depending upon the Indians to sustain their fur trade. Large trapping expeditions were organized instead and sent out to range the country for furs. Iroquois Indians from the east were brought into the Flathead country in the hope that their example would encourage the western Indians to do more trapping. Fort Connah was established on Post Creek in the Flathead valley sometime in the 1840's. It was one of the Hudson Bay posts and was operated by Angus McDonald who is the ancestor of one of the prominent Indian families on the reservation today.

Written records of the Flathead country begin about the time the Society of Jesus founded the Mission at St. Ignatius in 1854.