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Errors and omissions:

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## Notes

This section of *SHALE* provides an opportunity for contributors to present the partial results of ongoing research, publish less-than-normal-length articles, and provide “interesting facts”.

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### **Shopping in Nanaimo in 1857—by *Barrie Humphrey (with Carol Boyce)***

This record of accounts from the Hudson’s Bay store in Nanaimo in its early days is held by the Nanaimo Community Archives. Because it is extremely fragile, it cannot be photocopied. Instead of a copy, what follows is a transcription of the accounts, formatted to give the flavour of the original.

#### **Hudson’s Bay Company Nanaimo Day Book 1857–8**

No.	Name	January 5, 1857	
231	Bull, George	1 Bottle Rum	£ -/ 2/ 1
232	Cole, Thomas	1 Bottle Brandy	£ -/ 2/ 1
233	Sage, Jessie	1 Bottle Rum	£ -/ 2/ 1
234	Papley, Alexander	1 Bottle Rum	£ -/ 2/ 1
235	Ganner, Elijaah	1 Bottle Rum	£ -/ 2/ 1
236	Dunsmuir, Robert	1 quart Rum	£ -/ 3/ 2
237	Malpass, John	1 Bottle Rum	£ -/ 2/ 1
238	Thompson, John	1 Bottle Rum	£ -/ 2/ 1

Courtesy of the Nanaimo Community Archives

Accounts were kept in pounds (£) / shillings (s) / and pence (d). There were 12 pence (pennies) in a shilling, and 20 shillings in a pound. Numbers on the left appear to be employee or customer account numbers. Wages of Hudson’s Bay employees who were buying these supplies ranged upward from £17 per year for a labourer [about CDN \$2000 in modern terms, roughly 75¢ an hour]. They worked five full days and half of Saturday. A full day began at 5:00 a.m. in midsummer, and lasted 12–14 hours, but was shorter in winter. A day’s wages would be less than a shilling, so a bottle of rum cost more than two day’s work.

Some familiar names can be seen here, including Robert Dunsmuir, who went on to become one of British Columbia’s richest and most influential citizens. We don’t know what his pay

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was at the time he bought this quart of rum, but we do know that, as a skilled miner, he was paid £75 for a year's work in 1854 [about CDN \$9000 in modern terms].

No.	Name	January 6, 1857	
239	Dunn, Daniel	1/2 Yd Flannel 6 doz Hooks & Eyes Total	£ -/ 1/ - <u>-/ -/ 6</u> -/ 1/ 6
234	Papley, Alexander	1 # pepper corns 10 # Pork Total	£ -/ 1/ - <u>-/ 6/11</u> -/ 7/11
240	Isbister, William	5 Yd Blue Flannel 1/4 # Thread Total	£ -/ 8/ 9 <u>-/ 1/ 2</u> -/ 9/11
241	Meakins, John	1 pr Cord Trousers 1 pr long Hose Total	£ -/ 9/ 5 <u>-/ 5/ 3</u> -/14/ 8
238	Thompson, John	1 pr Shoes, Womens Strong 4 Yd White Shirting Cotton Total	£ -/ 8/ 4 <u>-/ 2/ 8</u> -/11/ -
242	Work, John	1 pr Womens Strong Shoes	£ -/ 8/ 4
231	Bull, George	6 doz Hooks & Eyes 1 paper pins 4 Yds [??] Cotton 2 pr Womens Strong Boots Total	£ -/ -/ 6 -/ 1/ 6 -/ 2/ - <u>-/16/ 8</u> 1/ - / 8
233	Sage, Jessie	1 pr Women Strong Shoes	£ -/ 8/ 4
242	Gough, Edwin	1 pr Strong Shoes (Woman)	£ -/ 8/ 4
235	Ganner, Elijaah	1 pr Strong Shoes for Women	£ -/ 8/ 4
236	Dunsmuir, Robert	1 pr shoes Women Strong	£ -/ 8/ 4
237	Malpass, John	1 pr Strong Womens Shoes	£ -/ 8/ 4
241	Meakins, John	1 pr Womens Strong Shoes	£ -/ 8/ 4

Courtesy of the Nanaimo Community Archives

We suspect that the men were sent back to the company store for more practical purchases the next day. Note that for a lower paid worker, a pair of trousers at 9s/5d, represented about a week's work. At these prices, it made good sense to buy materials and make your own clothes. Most men working for the HBC, whether single or married, could knit and sew. ◇