

The Bastard of Fort Stikine: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Murder of John McLoughlin, Jr.

Debra Komar

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Is it possible to reach back in time and solve an unsolved murder, more than 170 years after it was committed? Just after midnight on April 21, 1842, John McLoughlin, Jr. — the chief trader for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Stikine, in the northwest corner of the territory that would later become British Columbia — was shot to death by his own men. They claimed it was an act of self-defence, their only means of stopping the violent rampage of their drunk and abusive leader. Sir George Simpson, the HBC's Overseas Governor, took the men of Stikine at their word, and the Company closed the book on the matter. The case never saw the inside of a courtroom, and no one was ever charged or punished for the crime. To this day, the killing remains the Honourable Company's dirtiest unaired laundry and one of the darkest pages in the annals of our nation's history. Now, exhaustive archival research and modern forensic science — including ballistics, virtual autopsy, and crime scene reconstruction — unlock the mystery of what really happened the night McLoughlin died. Using her formidable talents as a writer, researcher, and forensic scientist, Debra Komar weaves a tale that could almsot be fiction, with larger-than-life characters and dramatic tension. In telling the story of John McLoughlin, Jr., Komar also tells the story of Canada's north and its connection to the Hudson's Bay Company.

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