

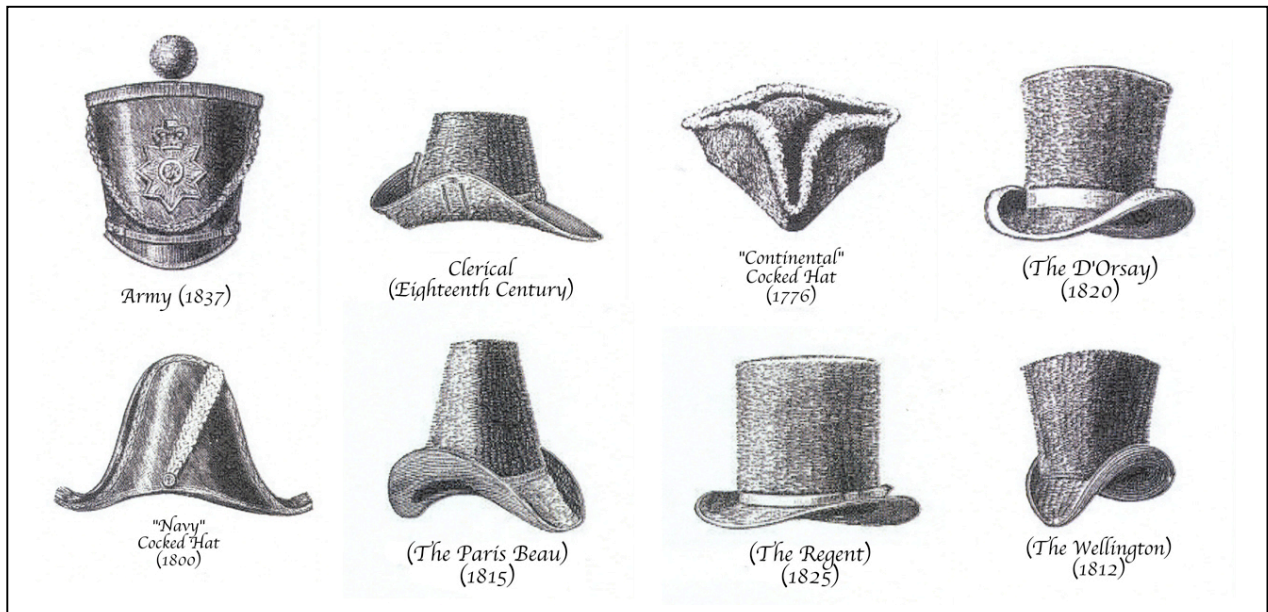
For Want of a Hat

As odd as it seems, it was a fashion for hats that drew the Hudson's Bay Company to Hudson Bay.

In the seventeenth century, everyone of style and note wanted a beaver hat. But this was not some furry headgear – when people spoke of a beaver hat, they actually meant one made of felt from the undercoat of the beaver's pelt. Once sheared from the pelt, this fine dense fur, consisting of thousands of short barbed hairs,

could be pressed into a glossy felt that was waterproof and could easily be worked into many different styles. Such hats were precious – a man might leave one to his son in his will – and Europe soon developed a thriving used-beaver-hat industry.

The style for beaver hats lasted well into the nineteenth century, when silk overtook it in popularity. By that time, the beaver was prized for its fur, not just for its felt.



Moore, Christopher (2000). *Adventurers: Hudson's Bay Company* (p. 6). Toronto, Canada: The Quantum Book Group Inc.