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## Jean Baptiste Eugene Laframboise

Early transportation was limited to walking, horseback, and pack animals. The following material is all from Richard Dillon.<sup>1</sup>

**1821** Michael, born Jean Baptiste Eugene Laframboise on May 5, 1797, in Varennes, near Montreal, had more than earned the position of “Captain of the California Trail”. Experience the Canadian had aplenty; it was his long suit. He had come with his father on the ill-fated Tonquin in March 1811. He had served in Astor’s aborted American enterprise at the Columbia’s mouth and trapped for the North-West Company before joining the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821.

**1824 - 1825** From 1824 on, he had been a skillful interpreter for expeditions to all corners of the fur country. However, McLoughlin kept Laframboise on a close rein from 1828 through 1832 because of a growing distrust of him. He had lied about the number of skins delivered for shipment in 1825 and he had disobeyed Alex McLeod’s orders in the 1826 - 1827 outfit.

**1830 - 1831** McLoughlin appointed Michael Postmaster at Fort Vancouver.

**1832** Michel was sent to punish the Tillamooks for murder. Laframboise once more broke orders and strayed to interior California via “McLeod’s Track, the Siskiyou Trail. He mollified an annoyed McLoughlin by turning over to him a good catch — 755 large beaver, 84 small beaver, and 152 other skins. In 1832 McLoughlin gave Laframboise the sobriquet of “Captain of the California Trail.”

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## “Captain of the California Trail”

**1834** John Work could not handle the strenuous demands of the Southern Party any longer. So McLoughlin posted him to the coastal trade and replaced him with Laframboise. Michel was ordered back to California. With this expedition the Siskiyou Trail settled down to its permanent track along the Sacramento. However, the Mexican government was concerned about this illegal trapping and restricted the trappers to Sonoma resulting in a poor hunt.

**1835** McLoughlin had been nervous about the eviction notices of the Mexicans, so he told Michel to hunt only between the Umpqua and the Klamath. Again Laframboise disobeyed orders and went to Buenaventura.

**1836** Michel had one more chance and another trip which was successful, grossing ^ 805.5.

**1837** Another Buenaventura expedition from April to July largely around San Francisco Bay yielded 1,185 large and 251 small beaver, and 431 otter. His catch was worth a remarkable ^ 2,314.

**1838** This year McLoughlin tried to outflank the Americans by having Laframboise to California and return by ship. Ship and party never found each other. Once more, Fort Vancouver’s distress at Laframboise’s failure to follow directions was soothed by the magnitude of his California catch — 1,361 large and 225 small beaver, and 884 otter. Profits were ^ 981, some ^ 120 more than the returns from that year’s Snake Country Outfit.

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## Michael’s Last Siskiyou Trail Hunt: 1840 - 1841

**1839** The grand ship-rendezvous plan was abandoned when Fort Vancouver learned that the situation in California was deteriorating further as Laframboise was experiencing serious difficulty with the *Californios*. Michel held out long enough in California to pull off a brilliant winter hunt — 1,404 large and 204 small beaver, and 695 otter.

The Brigade of Southern Expedition was described by Dr. Elijah White as “*The style in which they traveled was rather novel, bringing with them beds, bedding, tea, coffee, sugar, bread, cakes, cheese; and not even the wine was left behind. They were attended by a numerous suite, never forgetting the cook.*”

Laframboise was sent back down the Siskiyou Trail that same year. Upon returning he was hailed as a conquering hero of the fur trade, for he brought as “booty” some 1,380 large and 120 small beaver pelts, worth a net profit of ^ 1408.14.11.

**1840 - 1841** Times were changing and Laframboise objected to further Siskiyou Trail hunts because of the hostility of the *Californios*. This was Michel’s last Buenaventura expedition.

**Want more information?** Contact an officer of the *Hugo Neighborhood* on how you can become involved.

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1. Richard Dillon. 1975. *Siskiyou Trail: The Hudson’s Bay Company Route to California*. McGraw-Hill Book Company.

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## Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission of promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

### Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Make checks to the *Hugo Neighborhood* and send them to our Treasurer.

*Hugo Neighborhood Association*

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## HUDSON BAY COMPANY TRAPPERS

### Jean Baptiste Eugene Laframboise



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Brochure 3E in  
Trapper's Trail Series



May 24, 2008

Hugo Emigrant Trails Committee

Hugo Neighborhood Association &  
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