

Economy and Trading – The Great Merchant Houses, Trading Centers and Practices

Even before the nuclear winter was completely faded away, indeed, actually right after the nuclear holocaust, there were some survivors that had some things that others needed and the other way around. Many solved this problem with unethical methods, taking by force what they wanted. Many others were however not ready to go that far or did not need items but skills, which required the willing participation of the people with those skills.

Rather quickly a flourishing trade began to bloom, first in the “congested areas” of survival, where small to big groups had gathered, and soon after between those areas. And some people were more successful traders than others, whether they were luckier in that their trade goods were more wanted, or because they were better hagglers, or because they were even running sophisticated scams. In any case, some people grew richer than others.

In the following decades trading centers became established – first among those the Hub – and the methods became more formalized. By 2247 several large merchant houses came to exist and there are some cities and towns that function as large trading centers. The following pages show an overview over those merchant houses and centers, their history and their business practices. The great merchant houses have no monopolies however – there are many smaller caravan companies, that perform a giant part of the trading in the Wasteland.

Basics

What is transported and why:

In the legendary times of before the Great War, even before the Resource Wars, the shrewd traders of the Wasteland tell their children when those want to hear a story before sleeping, there were giant ships on the seas, that transported unbelievable amounts of all possible wares between continents, even ships that transported oil or iron (rather than, as it would certainly be somewhat smarter, just the products produced from those resources). When those ships then docked at their harbors, their freight was then transported onto a whole armada of trains, trucks and even air planes, that moved those wares further. When the children then look at them with big, unbelieving eyes, those parents confirm that people back then were so rich, they could afford to establish producing companies pretty much anywhere – the direct proximity to the resources or the ultimate customers was nearly unimportant, because it was insanely cheap in any case to move finished products or the materials needed for manufacture.

These times are of course over. In the south west of what were once the USA, there is exactly one functioning train line in 2247 (two if one counts the rebuilt, now on streets running “trains” that travel between the Boneyard and Shady Sands) and while there are roads and paths between the cities and towns, the times in which those were filled with a constant flow of trucks are over. And the big harbors in the coastal cities would only be useful, if there were large freight ships left.

No, the transport of people and freight in the post apocalyptic Wasteland must use other methods – and with other methods, nearly everything changes.

The first transports used solely and only muscle power as means of locomotion. Improvised wheelbarrows, that were pushed or pulled more often by humans than by brahmin in the early days. Accordingly, the traveling merchants chose carefully what they carried as wares: light or small things that were nonetheless valuable.

A settlement that is dependent on a well supplied by high powered pumps, would surely love to buy a replacement pump just to be sure – but how should a single man or one or two brahmin move a three ton pump from the factory where it was built (and several were still lying around in good condition in the warehouse) over the Sierra Nevada? Wouldn't it be easier, just to take one or two

much smaller but fragile looking replacement parts out of the pump in the abandoned factory and also take the manual and bring those items to the settlement? The whole package would only weigh around 5 pounds – sure, it's not worth as much as a whole pump, but it's a lot less effort.

The more the system grew, the more brahmin or horses were added as beasts of burden, the principle never changed. Great profit margin is synonymic with small wares that have a high value. Raw materials usually have no high value (a large, not machined bar of iron is seldom as useful, as the things that can be smithed out of it) and are therefore rarely transported. The largest part of the freight is made up of finished goods. That does not mean, that only high quality finished products are transported or that no one delivers raw materials – there are still junk traders and swindlers and gecko skins are in much demand with leather workers, which makes that a clear example for a raw material that commands a good price even without refinement.

How are things transported:

In large part of the Wasteland – even in wide areas of the Republic – traveling is a dangerous undertaking. For ages, that problem has been solved with two approaches: through large numbers of armed travelers, that would be very dangerous to attack or by using lightly loaded single people or small groups, that have an easier time evading dangers.

The latter solution might be a reasonable way to transport letters and small packages, but not for the industry or the many stores that are dependent on movement of trade goods. Due to the many, usually unsecured streets that caravans travel on, a rather safe method has developed: the caravans are composed of several groups of traders. Each group has a pair of pack brahmin or one or two carts or similar modes of transportation (usually) one accountable merchant and several guards. That is in no way enough for defensive purposes against many gangs – and to hire enough guards, so that the caravan would be safe from all but the largest gangs, would be losing deal without comparison.

Because of that, the single groups join other groups that travel in the same direction. Even if several of the other groups often contain competitors, no one really cares. Several such groups at once, that all want to travel to the same city, or at least share a large part of the way, are enough heavily armed people to scare off even large gangs most of the time. The danger exists only, when the groups spread apart again. It's rather unlikely, that one must have to wait, for example in Shady Sands, more than 6 days, until several groups to Redding have found themselves and organized themselves into a caravan. But once one arrives in Redding and wants to continue on to Klamath or to one of the tribes between Redding and the Pacific coast, one could wait a long time to find someone else, that wants to go there – the group is left standing alone and now the truly dangerous part begins.

The Crimson Caravans

Short overview and history:

The largest, most prestigious merchant house inside the NCR is, without a doubt, the Crimson Caravans.

When exactly the Crimson Caravans were founded has simply been lost in the chaos of the first years. Some claim, that the carts of the first merchants that joined ranks and became this company, were all painted red, which would explain the name.

The Crimson Caravans became famous (and also infamous) by taking any job in their first years. Especially those that were too dangerous for others. They commanded high prices, but also paid generous hazard pay to their guards and merchants – and the customers knew, that one could depend on the Crimson Caravans.

This led not only to an ever returning clientele, but also had the effect, that the Crimson Caravans were usually the first to enter a new area and therefore also the first to economically develop it. In 2161 (the year in which the Vault Dweller greatly shaped the world) the Crimson Caravans were employed to deliver water to Adytum and to Necropolis, but also maintained relatively secure trading routes, for example to Junktown, Shady Sands or to the Brotherhood of Steel.

Organized was the whole organization, more or less anyway, from the Hub. However, the order of the day was continuous improvisation.

As the Republic was declared in 2196 in Shady Sands, the Crimson Caravans were ecstatic. Of course they understood, that a true government would enact taxes – but a true government would also make good, sensible, use of those taxes. Streets that were more than a familiar strip in the dirt or the pitiful remains of a pre war highway, soldiers that secure those roads and simplify trading, maybe even the return of true currency. The Crimson Caravans recognized the potential and stood firmly behind the young republic and helped it grow.

And the young republic proofed loyal, The Crimson Caravans not only profited from streets and security: whenever the government would conduct a procurement procedure, nearly every time they would get at least an offer from the Crimson Caravans, that were by now preferred alone for the fact, that they have yet to disappoint.

In 2247 the Crimson Caravans are concentrating on trading finished goods – the raw products from which they are produced are only of peripheral interest. The array of products they sell contains everything, from clothing (the cheapest imaginable clothing up to the newest fashion by Sweet & Cubana from New Reno), to tools, guns and ammunition. As pertains the interior market of the NCR the Crimson Caravans are experts in getting the lucrative jobs offered by the Republic. Among others, they supply the Ranger barracks in the city states with food and uniforms, as well as some of their technical gear.

Structure, size and organization:

The nearly anarchistic organization of the early years made room for more thoughtful methods, especially in the first years after the founding of the Republic. Instead of one or two people sitting in an office, taking on the jobs, organizing the caravans and hiring new guards, while the rest travels all across the wasteland and gets to have all the fun and excitement, they decided to create clear structures and work in a much more planned way.

The Crimson Caravans of the past were a loose group of traders, that had simply banded together out of comfort. The first order of business was to create the structures, that would decide how the future structures should be created.

The traders, the office personnel and the regular, firmly employed guards were given *shares* in the company. The shareholders voted about the next steps, where two guidelines were the first two be introduced: the majority vote is the decision and there would be at least twice a year an assembly of

the shareholders, where at least 70% of the *shares* would have to be present. At these assemblies, the shareholders would decide over the management, after the management gave a report about the current development of the business and had to justify their actions in an open question round. Usually, those assemblies take place in February and August.

In 2247 the Crimson Caravans employ around 1000 people, from accountants and lawyers to storekeepers and stable hands, merchants and caravan guards. The Crimson Caravans have their headquarters still in the Hub, but their offices can be found in all large cities of the NCR as well far beyond the Republican borders. Among others, their largest foreign office is in New Reno and there are smaller ones in Redding and Broken Hills.

The Crimson Caravans *wanted* to open an office in Vault-City, but the city's government demanded large amounts of taxes from them, as well as the right to inspect their books at any time, a say in who the company would hire in Vault-City and much more, that the management of the Crimson Caravans saw as a direct attack on themselves, on free trade and on the Republic. Instead, they opened an office in Gecko, where the ghouls happily welcomed them and even gave them a share of their limited resources, until the whole needed equipment of the Crimson Caravans arrived there.

The Crimson Caravans had also tried, around 2240, to open an office in the north west, in Klamath, to discover routes up north, towards Seattle and even Canada. The Slaver Guild however raided many of their caravans in that area, enslaved the merchants and killed most of the guards as a message to the Crimson Caravans management: up here, we organize the trading.

The Crimson Caravans bought back their surviving, enslaved, employees in that area, moved the rest back to Redding and opened a new bank account, with high interest rates, at one of the largest, Republican banks. An account that was immediately filled with 10,000 NCR Dollars, and which many announcements in the press advertised as being the bounty for Metzger, the Head of the Slaver Guild.

Business practices:

The Crimson Caravans are primarily a company of traders and transactors. They have other branches of business, too, but their main branch is still the organization of trade routes and the use of those routes.

Their merchant groups belong to the best equipped of the Wasteland. None of their groups use wheelbarrows to transport their wares and pack brahmin are nearly all gone. The average trading group of the Crimson Caravans is composed of one merchant with one or two brahmin carts or wagons, pulled by at least two brahmin each, escorted by three to five well armed caravan guards. Of course, the armament, number and quality of guards varies a lot between the routes. On the main roads of the Republic, between the Boneyard and Shandy Sands, trading groups are often comprised of only two carts and three persons: the trader and two guards, one of which drives the other cart and comes along less as a guard but more to be a maybe needed replacement and general "girl Friday". With two carts and 4 to 8 brahmin traveling as a group of three is much nicer.

The payment by the Crimson Caravans varies of course by position – especially as pertains method and quality. Caravan guards are paid in NCR Dollars, usually 50 \$ a day, with another 50 \$ bonus for each day involving combat actions. The exact amount varies of course by danger rating of the route and experience of the guard. Payment is usually handled half at the start of the travels and the rest and possible bonus payments when they arrive at their destination.

The traveling merchants get a smaller salary from the company: 30\$ a day. Since there are no really fixed prices for the wares and haggling is the order of the day, the basic wage is consciously set low. The traders get 3% of the profit of their trading group (after taxes and customs duties) – so they have a natural incentive to haggle well. Furthermore, they get a provision for negotiating a new contract with large customers.

As already mentioned, a loose alliance of a handful of traveling salesmen and a few guards needs neither very large offices, nor very efficient ones – especially not, when they can easily dispense with many positions, that similar companies would have needed before the Great War – when there are no taxes or other harassment by the state, one surely needs no host of tax accountants and lawyers. Those times are however barely a memory for the Crimson Caravans now and their greatly grown organization has now quite different job openings than it had just a few decades prior.

The Crimson Caravans as a company own so many brahmin and horses, that, should one somehow assemble one all of them in one place, the herds of most ranchers would look small next to them (the Rancher's brahmin herds however are used for meat, milk and leather production, not for transport). This necessitates stables at each field office of the Crimson Caravans. That necessitates in each stable some stable hands. Most field offices of the Crimson Caravans fill such openings with workers, whose contracts would probably have led to armed riots by labor unions before the Great War: the workers commit themselves to work for a certain period of time (usually three months or six months) to work for the company. The contract stipulates an exactly defined salary, usually around 350 NCR Dollars per month. The hitch is: payment is due at the end of the contract. Since most people, especially when they do back breaking, hard work for 10 to 12 hours a day, occasionally like to eat and drink, they of course get those needs satisfied by the Crimson Caravans, but this is subtracted from their pay. They get a bed in a dormitory and even, if necessary, work clothes and even medical care – which is all subtracted from their pay. As are any damages that happen.

It's not uncommon to receive little more than 100 \$ at the end of the 6 months period. In fact, several people have managed to have to sign another, new contract with the Crimson Caravans, because they were *owing* the company money for the work they did. Such work contracts of course work only for unqualified laborers, that work hard in the stables or the storerooms. The office personnel of the Crimson Caravans would never let themselves be exploited like that. A person who knows the tricks of tax evasion or knows how to smartly plan caravans and their load-out and all those things, wants to be paid differently and better – after all, the school where they learned this, was expensive.

By and large, the Crimson Caravans stayed true to their name and have little interest in changing that. They buy, transport and sell wares – and they collect provisions for bringing together business people, that usually produce wares. That is their business. The Crimson Caravans have no interest in building factories that build this or that – or research and development centers, that find new, cheaper way to build this or that faster or better, to keep one step ahead of the competition.

That doesn't mean that the management is so shortsighted, that they do not know that systems can change – after all, the Crimson Caravans has supported such changes in the New California Republic already. Sooner or later, everyone knows that, the methods of transporting wares will change.

The Crimson Caravans invest a, to be fair, rather small, part of their profits in other branches of business. Mainly and as a result of their labor contracts, they have founded the second oldest bank of the Republic. Due to the large number of beasts of labor and transport carts they established the Crimson Caravan-Essentials Company in 2220, a standalone company with about 40 employees, that build both several kinds of carts as well as the corresponding leather wares, from saddles to bridles. This company mostly builds for the needs of the Crimson Caravans, but also entertains many private people and smaller caravan companies as customers – many of them just for the thrill that everyone that can afford it, loves to buy the equipment used by the real professionals.

The Crimson Caravans are a company that works after an economical viewpoint. Everything that interests the management is money. They have a responsibility towards their shareholders – and only if they do their job well in their eyes, they get a majority of the shareholders to authorize their bonus payments when they wish to retire. Like with every other large company, it's in the interest of the Crimson Caravans to remain a large company.

The Crimson Caravans fall under the jurisdiction of the New California Republic – and even though their personal commitment to the Republic is less shaped by a desire to help their fellow men, they are for the Republic and its expansion. They pay taxes and wouldn't even try to do too many tricks, even if the Republican tax collectors wouldn't keep a close eye on their books. That does not mean, that they miss even one legal trick and that they do not cross occasionally into grey areas of legality.

The Crimson Caravans would never bribe a senator or a representative – but a bit of lobby work and brown nosing isn't forbidden in the NCR. After all, election campaigns cost money, that not everyone has available. One could therefore see it as a kind of service to the Republic (which is what the small, but hardworking PR department of the Crimson Caravans tells everyone that even looks like asking a question about that). If a thusly elected senator therefore advocates for issues involving the Crimson Caravans, that's certainly not due to the money – no, he simply decides based on solely patriotic considerations. After all, secure trading is good for everyone, right?

As pertains the competition, the Crimson Caravans were special in that, like many other caravan companies from the Hub, even before the founding of the Republic, never would have tried to take out the competition using violence. Free trade is something the Crimson Caravans take seriously. Hiring mercenaries, that hunt the competition would not only be illegal and amoral: it would go wrong. Sooner or later, it would be noticed, people would arm themselves better and start shooting at the first sign of violence and very soon, the streets aren't safe, but a war zone and a large part of the trade breaks down – a catastrophe for the Republic and even if the Republican law system would never find out who was responsible for starting it all, it would still lead to record losses for the Crimson Caravans.

Instead they steal the larger competition, like the Far Go Traders or the Gunrunners as much of their customers as possible and other legal tricks are also applied. Of course, the others do the same.

Small competitors are usually ignored by the Crimson Caravans. A brahmin cart and four young people fond of traveling, are no real competition, even if they move a bit of freight. Especially competent, fond of traveling young people, who also show up often, are rather recruited and their business bought to a really fair price respectively. Good help is hard to find.

Current situation and plans for the future:

The Crimson Caravans are in the best shape they've ever been in and it seems as if nothing would be able to change that in the foreseeable future. The trade routes inside the Republic are rather safe and with few dangers, even if one does not earn too much delivering tiny towns and villages. The trade routes outside the Republic are extremely lucrative. The NCR produces much, that can easily be sold – and there is much that is needed in the NCR that is much cheaper outside of its borders.

It's the main objective of the Crimson Caravans to expand and improve the outer trade routes. The office in Klamath failed because of the Slaver Guild, but there are considerations of using small small boats to go up the coast to Oregon and Washington and open trade routes there, maybe by opening an office in Seashore.

Less problematic it seems, would be to expand east and south, into the areas that were once known as Arizona and Mexico and where the Crimson Caravan has already sent the first, mostly expeditionary, caravans to explore future possibilities.

The Far Go Traders

Short overview and history:

The Far Go Traders were founded around 2140 in the Hub by Butch Harris. Around 2130 Harris was a young man, full of wanderlust, that began to travel rounds between the cities. After he had shown up a few times here and there, people suddenly began giving him wares and services, often even a few caps, if he would deliver this letter to Junktown or promised to bring this box to the Brotherhood of Steel.

After about ten years of doing so, he started losing the joy of it. At sometime he met a man called Rutger in a bar in the Hub. Rutger had never been full of wanderlust, but he was ambitious and smart and he suggested Butch Harris a partnership: together they could open a real, honest to god, trading company.

The two of them organized all that they needed. They took over an abandoned building as an office and storehouse, put up a sign, that said in simple, black capital letters 'Far Go Traders' and opened the door. Young people with the same wanderlust that had motivated Butch Harris ten years before, came and let this legend among them convince them, not just to go out into the Wastes, but to start doing so directly for the Far Go Traders. He explained to them, that they would be able to satisfy their Wanderlust much safer that way, while Rutger explained to their customers what a treasure trove of experience Butch Harris was, and how much their businesses could profit from all that and so on.

When at the end of the 2150s more and caravans began disappearing (later it became known, that this wasn't due to the appearance of the first Deathclaws but due to the Army of the Master), Butch Harris and Rutger were overwhelmed with the situation. The customers wandered off to the competition and they lost people – many of them had been loyal employees and often enough friends for nearly ten years – the Far Go Traders were in the middle of a crisis. The only silver lining for the Far Go Traders was, that they had, unlike their competition in the transport business, invested much more into stores and the first producing enterprises, among others, weapon stores and farms. The situation changed abruptly as the Vault Dweller ended the danger posed by the Army of the Master – and the Master himself – in 2161.

The trade flourished again, but the Far Go Traders had learned their lessons from what had happened. They began to diversify, invested their money into various projects. Instead of primarily being traders, they helped (for a large part of the future profits) with the start-up of many shops, farms and workshops.

2196, sixteen years after Butch Harris had passed on his position to his daughter Virginia (and a little more than 21 years after Rutger had died in an accident), the New California Republic was founded in Shady Sands. Virginia Harris was not excited. The way she saw it, a government would mean taxes that would lessen profits, tyranny through laws, submission to a parliament or a government or something in this backwater farming town Shady Sands and furthermore: 'Government'? 'Peace and prosperity for all if we work together'?! They won't last three years!

Unlike the Crimson Caravans, the Far Go Traders under the leadership of Virginia Harris tried to prevent the joining of the Hub to the NCR. While Junktown joined enthusiastically, the Hub remained independent, due to the resistance by the Far Go Traders, until the Boneyard had joined and the Hub was pretty much surrounded by this new nation.

Virginia Harris had lost her battle – and the Far Go Traders would pay for it in the following years. Instead of quailing however, they began to salvage what was possible. The Far Go Traders were still one of the largest trading companies in the South West, whether the new government reigned the Hub now or not. The problems were great, many customers shied away from the Far Go Traders, some fearing reprisals by the new government. Others saw the Far Go Traders responsible for not welcoming the new government sooner, when it soon became obvious that it did a lot of good. None

the less the Far Go Traders began flourishing under her leadership again soon thereafter. While the Crimson Caravans by and large stayed a transport and trading business, the Far Go Traders became the first big corporation of the NCR. While they had always invested in producing businesses, they grew that part of their operation until their caravans were already showing a profit, by just moving the goods of the corporation from one place to another.

Virginia Harris died in 2228 and left the business to her three children, that now run the Far Go Traders in the third generation.

Structure, size and organization:

The Far Go Traders are – unlike many other large companies of their time – a family business. Since the founding of the company, the Harris family ran it.

Today, the Far Go Traders employ 700 people in their own plants. Since they own shares in numerous farms, ranches, smithies, furrier's workshops, cart construction workshops, repair shops and so on, in which about 1400 other people work, they are probably the largest employer in the Republic save the Republic itself.

After the death of Rutger, Butch Harris took care of everything himself. He was the Far Go Traders – and was careful to train his daughter early. Virginia Harris did the same as her father, but she had three children. Butch Harris Junior, her oldest son, had little in the way of business sense, at least compared to his siblings. But he understood machine construction. And deconstruction. And invention. He was a tinkerer and therefore suited, to evaluate the ideas for new workshops and to take care of everything that had something to do with engineering. Virginia Harris formed the department of 'technical development' for him and let him work his thing there.

Sandy, the second born, did not only inherit the good looks of her mother, but also her sense of business. She understood best how to interact with her fellows and to negotiate shrewd contracts and she now carries the title of executive director.

Sundance, the second son of Virginia, became an adrenaline junkie, similar to his grandfather. He loved accompanying the caravans, but unlike his grandfather, he did not go as a trader, but as a guard. He led caravans time and again successfully out of dangerous situations and he developed a keen sense for dangers and tactics. According to the old, military wisdom, that an unfair fight is the fight you lose, and that one has to do everything that can be done to win, Sundance quickly understood the commercial implications of this wisdom. While the "security department" that his mother had founded mostly hired caravan guards, body guards and night watchmen, Sundance takes care of the illegal machinations of the Far Go Traders with a few trusted confidants: industrial espionage mostly, but also the trade with raw materials for the drug production in New Reno.

Business practices:

The Far Go Traders were really never only a transport business. In 2247 they are mostly money lenders and makers of connections, for whom the transport of wares is a minor matter (measured in profits). They invest in workshops, stores, farms, ranches and factories. That usually works by someone with a business idea approaching the Far Go Traders and laying out a business idea. Sometimes those are just people with special skills, sometimes people that found machines in an abandoned small town, that could produce something amazing if they only stood somewhere where there would be electrical power, streets and maybe someone who knows how to properly use them.

In any case, the accountants and experts rate this idea and work out how much money would be needed. If the whole thing seems to be sensible and long term profitable, a contract between the Far Go Traders and the person with the idea is set up. The Far Go Traders commit themselves, to help with the start-up of the new company. To stay with the second example: they bring those big

machines from the forgotten and abandoned small town to the next bigger town that fits the requirements, pay for the construction of a fitting building and help the person that discovered the machines, to find a few good employees and some first buyers.

All this is of course not done out of altruism by the Far Go Traders. They receive, until double of their initial investment is paid, 50% of the profits of the start-up. During this time, the Far Go Traders have full access on the books – and if for some reason more money is needed than was stipulated in the original contract, they come up with really high interests for the next credit. Until the initial loan is worked of, which might often take up to 30 years, the company belongs to the Far Go Traders. Completely. The contracts partner is during this time only the *manager working for the Far Go Traders*. Only when he has repaid the Far Go Traders everything, he can, if he wants to, take possession. Or he can sell the whole operation to the Far Go Traders, for which they will offer him a ridiculous price – and permanent employment with the Far Go Traders.

The Far Go Traders are also not squeamish and plagued by conscience, when they have to help their business interests in nearly or fully illegal ways. Sundance Harris and the handful of his associates in the security department take care mostly of industrial espionage – but also work on ways to smartly send “medical supply goods” to New Reno – some even claim that he’s responsible for the disappearance of several small caravans, but no one has yet been able to proof that and all of those caravans disappeared far beyond the borders of the NCR. Apart from that, the security department of course also takes care of their legal duties: the protection of the facilities of the Far Go Traders and their caravans.

None the less, it’s assumed in the New California Investigative Agency, that the Far Go Traders do a lot of illegal deeds and they keep quietly investigating them – so far with no success however.

Current situation and plans for the future:

The Far Go Traders as a whole are doing amazingly well. Some of the businesses that belong to the corporation are doing – for various reasons – less than good or even bad, but since the preponderant part keeps in the black, that is more than balanced.

One of the most important investment areas for the Far Go Traders is, due to the unceasing urging of Butch Harris Junior, energy production. Electrical power is the future and Butch is making sure, that the Far Go Traders have a rather large part in that future, tinkering with everything from wind generators, to nuclear power and maybe even the maybe sometime realizable underwater turbines in front of the Boneyard. While that is going on, his sister makes sure that there is enough money for Butch’s costly developments, by *not* asking her brother Sundance how he came to the information that enabled them, to outmaneuver the Gunrunners and the Crimson Caravans – what she does not know can never be perjury, if she ever has to deny his practices in front of a court.

The Gunrunners:

Short overview and history:

The beginnings of the Gunrunners are little glamorous. Originally, they were a gang that left the Hub in the late 2120s to conquer a new, own, territory in the Boneyard. Around 2131, shortly after their arrival in the Boneyard, they nested themselves in an abandoned factory, fortified their position – and then decided to rather use this still completely functional production facility to build weapons and ammunition themselves.

In the beginning the Gunrunners produced only for their own needs. 2155 they finally left their past as a plundering gang behind and began becoming businesspersons and started selling weapons.

After they had quickly used up their store of scrap metal building new weapons, they started building fresh replenishment, mainly from the nearby Adytum. As the Regulators took the control in 2158, the trade balance between the two groups began looking worse and worse for the Gunrunner. They tried opening new trade routes, but the nearby established nest of Deathclaws made this impossible. In 2161 the Gunrunners were economically done, but to their fortune, the Vault-Dweller visited the Boneyard in that year, destroyed the Deathclaw nest for the Gunrunners and helped throw the Regulators out of the Adytum and give it back to it's people.

The trade routes were open to the Gunrunners again, and once more, their business flourished. The Gunrunners and their product line-up grew, weapons and ammunition stayed in demand in the Wasteland. The secret of their success never changed from their early days until 2247: an astonishingly loose organization, that leaves the technicians and engineers much needed creative liberty, a continuous stream of new employees that bring new ideas and blood into the organization and many production techniques – many of those dating back to before the Great War – that guarantee high quality. The Gunrunners were producing the largest part of the NCR Rangers firepower even before the Boneyard joined the Republic. In fact, they did so before the Year of Fire, before the Rangers became the official military of the Republic.

Structure, size and organization:

When the Gunrunners were a gang, their leader was the one person, that both enjoyed the loyalty and the faith of the gang, as well as the best commander during raids and the one being regarded as fairest arbiter of disputes in the family. The procedure to dispose one and appoint the next were rather informal – but nearly always respected by all involved – that at least is what the Gunrunners of the year 2247 claim.

When they slowly became a respectable company of professional mechanics and business persons, structures had to be created. In the year 2161, the Gunrunners were not far from dissolving, but were spared by fate due to the intervention of the Vault-Dweller. They got an in the wastes very rare second chance and used it. Also in 2161, just a few days after the Regulators were expelled from the Adytum, they chose a committee from their ranks, that was tasked with creating the needed structures, structures, that should make it possible to develop a true business strategy and to enforce it.

Six months later, the Code of the Gunrunners was created. It divided the company into three *Divisions*, regulated the method of electing the directors of the divisions and of the CEOs of the Gunrunners and what rights and duties those posts would entail. Furthermore, they created the procedures for expanding the Gunrunners.

The divisions were 'Buying and Selling', 'Security' and of course 'Production and Development'. Each local branch of the Gunrunners has three directors, each heading the division of that branch. The leadership of the whole company is made up of the *Chief Executive Officers*, one from each division and they are headquartered in the main branch of the Gunrunners in the Boneyard.

Both the directors as well as the CEOs are elected by the Gunrunners, staying in office for five years after the election. A Gunrunner who has been working, in any way whatsoever, for two years for the Gunrunners, has a vote. For each further year, he gets another vote, meaning a Gunrunner who worked there for 10 years has 8 votes. A Gunrunner may only vote for a candidate for CEO of his own division, for the directors of branches, only the people working in that branch have a vote. For example, a Gunrunner of the 'Security' Division has no vote for the CEO of the 'Production and Development' CEO – as a Gunrunner based in the Boneyard would have no vote for the post of director of the 'Security' Division in Shady Sands.

In the year 2247 the Gunrunners have a lot of growth behind them. As most important supplier of weaponry to the NCR Rangers, they maintain a large branch in view of the headquarters of the Rangers in Shady Sands, that only has a bit of production capacity, but is full of staff working for 'Buying and Selling'.

Their headquarters are still located in the Boneyard. About 70% of their production is from there and that is also where the CEOs are.

The Gunrunners have also opened a large branch in the Hub and many people claim, that this branch works closely with Ranger Platoon 35 – not, that there is a clear statement to what exactly Platoon 35 really does. The rumors go from research into bio weapons like the FEV Poison of the Enclave to tanks and power armor, up to the construction of an NCR Air Force. Really known is only, that the Gunrunners have about 25% of their production in the Hub.

In total, there are about 600 Gunrunners, with 400 working in Production and Development and the rest evenly spread between Buying and Selling and Security.

Business practices:

The Gunrunners got their start as little structured, nearly anarchistic gang. Even if they have long since stopped raiding and pillaging, they still seem unorganized in comparison to the Crimson Caravans or the Far Go Traders.

In some ways, this appearance is wrong. While the Gunrunners have a friendly, familiar atmosphere in which everyone gives his best to have fun at work, but when all is said and done, it's still about work and profit, for the company as a whole as well as for single employees.

In fact, the Gunrunners were more organized before their time as traders, as many trading companies – not to mention most other gangs. They shared their plunder after a certain scheme, that considered all those involved, even those, who were not direct participants in the raid, but instead guarded their lair. Those received accordingly less, after all, they had not been shot at, but they were always able to switch position with one of their colleagues for the next raid. The early Gunrunners, that were still Raiders and Outlaws, even had a shared "booty fund" which was filled more and more after each raid, to serve as a rainy day fund in emergencies.

Even as mechanics and traders and even after more than a century, they still hold to their original tradition. The contracts are nowadays written and somewhat more clearly formulated and the word 'plunder' has been exchanged with the word 'profit', but that's pretty much all the change there has been. An employee of the Gunrunners receives a fixed, comparatively high wage, and can earn a bonus payment, by helping the whole of the company in some form. Bonuses have been earned by single Gunrunners by creating or finding new construction plans for weapons, by simplifying or improving production with clever suggestions, by pulling in new, large, buyers or by defending a caravan or a trading post of the Gunrunners energetically, as a guard.

The Gunrunners try not to swindle their employees – even those, that do more or less unqualified work. The work contracts are usually open-ended, with a month long period of notice. However, they do not subscribe to the principle, that the same work deserves the same pay – wages are somewhat based on how long a person has been an employee of the Gunrunners, and partly on how

precious this person and their work is for the company. The average Gunrunner earns about 450 \$ a month (not counting possible bonus payments), with wages varying widely of course, between simple gofers in the storage rooms (around 200 \$) to experts and specialists in manufacturing the very best firearms in the Wasteland (up to 3000 \$). On the other hand, it's not uncommon to rise the ranks and get further training in the company.

The largest part of the needed raw materials, the Gunrunners buy from scavengers operating in the Boneyard – even after one and half centuries, there is more than enough scrap metal in the ruins of Los Angeles. But they also greet with great pleasure independent caravans that drive to their gates and sell scrap metal or trade it for weapons and ammunition. The largest buyer of the Gunrunners supplies are the Rangers, but by far not the only ones. The Gunrunners sell their products to civilians and other official agencies of the NCR and even outside of the NCR. They have little trade with the Shi in San Francisco and none with Vault-City – but as much as they produce, a lot of their products end up there anyway, over several middle men.

Current situation and plans for the future:

The CEOs of the Gunrunners are, by and large, quite content with the status quo. Unlike the Crimson Caravans the Gunrunners were never renowned for their adventurous way. And unlike the Far Go Traders, they never showed a lot of interest in filling all niches of the economy.

The Gunrunners are more careful and conservative – they have been experimenting since 2243 with the production of armor and wish to expand their product range with a selection of armors. Likewise, they wish to produce more energy weapons, something they've been doing in very small numbers until now. In the Production and Development Division there are several experiments taking place with vehicles, artillery cannons, mortars and much more that could bear fruits, if developed if produced up to series-production readiness – but they invest into none of these projects so much money that it has to succeed or the company will bankrupt.

The Gunrunners expand – similar to the NCR itself – slowly but continuously. And they keep to their traditions as they do so, both the tradition of a relaxed working environment as well as the tradition to produce the best, most accurate and most deadly arms of the Wasteland.

The Slaver Guild:

Short overview and history:

Abusing the weak, including forced labor and forced prostitution is really not a novel idea, that no one ever had before the Great War. The first decades after the bombs fell were informed by ruthless battle for the very survival. Only when the nuclear winter slowly ended, real agrarian production restarted and humanity fought itself bit by bit out of the ashes to rise again like a phoenix, the historiography began again – and humanity proved, that their history does not change.

It was nearly unavoidable, that the “strongest” would exploit the “weakest”, even if surely no one would have counted with a well organized exploitation starting that quickly. According to rumors, that over time became legends and myths, the first leader of the Slaver Guild was called Garvis, a merciless murderer and raider with too much education. Instead of raiding a small farmstead and sadistically torturing it’s denizens for a day or two, until it stopped being funny (or the victims were dead, whatever happened first) until the “joy of a new toy” was gone, he asked himself, why not just keep the denizens of this small farmstead? Why not force them to work for us all the time? Why have the short lived fun of a few days full of pain, humiliation and rape, when we could keep the beautiful daughter alive, so she can be available year after year.

Out of Garvis ideas the Slaver Guild was created, though no one really knows when and where that was. To be fair, it has to be said, that most inhabitants of the Wasteland despise this practice and do not buy slaves, but there are enough exceptions, that buy cheap labor from the guild and let it work. The Guild probably began in northern Nevada, the headquarter however moved around 2210 to the Den in northern California. Since 2235 Metzger leads the guild in California, a man of whom many think that the legendary Garvis looks rather nice and compassionate in comparison too.

Structure, size and organization:

The Guild is hierarchically organized: Metzger is on top. He alone gives out the important instructions, decides who will be a business partner or ware, leads the largest part of the organizational work and sets the standard for the treatment of the “wares”. He also gives out single assignments or duties to deputies of his own choosing, his so called Lieutenants.

According to estimates by the intelligence division of the NCR Rangers there are around 300 members of the Slavers Guild in 2247, that can all be recognized by a prominent, artistic tattoo in their face, usually on the temple.

Since Metzger most certainly knows, that many mighty organizations in the Wasteland are not very friendly towards the institution of slavery, he makes certain that no one but him has insight into every aspect of the business, so that through the loss of a single Slaver that would be “convinced” to share all he knows before he dies, the whole organization wouldn’t be endangered.

Business practices:

Slavery in the post apocalyptic Wasteland is *not* racist. The Guild acquires new slaves by raiding and capturing the weakest and most defense less – those are, for a large part, so called “wild” tribes, that live on the land and use little in the way of technology (many of those tribes do not even have firearms) – or even small settlements, that do not count as wild tribes in the eyes of most of the Wasteland, but have little more in the way of technology.

New slaves receive collars, of which there are several versions. The most used is just a heavy, iron collar with attached rings to chain together several slaves on one, long, chain. Others have a small, electrical supply and electrodes, that allow the overseers to torture the slaves with electrical shocks

by using a small remote control until they become docile. The rarest kind, that the Slaver Guild has only in very limited numbers, contains a bit of explosives, just enough to guarantee that the head will be immediately and completely severed by the explosion. The overseers like to attach these collars to the children or spouses of “troublemakers”, to apply further pressure on them. The explosion can be triggered by a radio signal. There is a different setting, too, that triggers the explosion once a certain radio signal is no longer received. This allows for easier transportation of slaves, since one doesn’t have to continuously keep the slaves fenced in, but instead just has to watch the sender, since the slaves can’t move more than a few hundred yards from it.

The Slaver Guild does not only trade in human beings, but generally in every kind of ware, selling of which requires a complete lack of any morals: outlawed weaponry, poisons and drugs.

Current situation and plans for the future:

After the Chosen One destroyed the drilling rig of the Enclave in 2242, the Guild lost one of their biggest and best paying customers. Luckily, the Enclave wasn’t the only customer the Slavers Guild has in 2242: Vault-City and the Mordino Family in New Reno were still interested in cheap labor or guinea pigs for new drugs, which gave the Slavers Guild a certain buffer to balance losses and find a new set of customers.

The solution was close to hand for Metzger: he immediately started to sell slaves in small groups or even singles to private customers. Furthermore the Guild not only began selling more and more outlawed weapons, but also building more regulars trading routes to the north: something they made impossible to the Crimson Caravans and other trading houses of the NCR with all force, going after possible competition in the north with a vengence.

In short, the Guild of 2247 is going strong – and unfortunately it looks as if nothing will change that in the short-term.

The great centers of trade:

The following describes in short the three largest trading centers of the post apocalyptic south west. Details to the history of those cities can be found in the general descriptions of those towns and cities.

The Hub: The Hub is without a doubt the largest trading center in southern California and owes this position to the fact, that it had to offer clean water in large quantities during the nuclear winter. As largest city in the NCR, that furthermore lies rather central, it remains a perfect trading hub for all kinds of goods in 2247. All large merchant houses of the NCR either come out of the Hub or have one of their largest offices there.

New Reno: New Reno, Nevada's second largest city of sin, is something of a mirror reversed image of the Hub: Like it, it's a by post apocalyptic standards huge city, New Reno did not become a trading center because of it's stability but rather due to it's instability and the lack of any conscience of the Families. Pretty much all caravans, even those selling more, say, normal, goods and move on to the north, stop there. In New Reno, all kinds of deals are possible.

Redding: Redding, the fought over small town with the gold mines, has mostly become a trading center because all powers in California want that gold. Vault-City, the NCR and New Reno court the town with the most diverse methods for the acceptance of the local population, to get the gold for themselves alone.