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ARTICLES:

IN MEMORY OF MARY ROSE (PRITCHARD) SAYERS
THE LAST WITNESS

In the early morning of April 2, 1885, Wandering Spirit and his Indian brothers perpetrated the Frog Lake massacre. Eighty-five years later on the morning of December 27, 1970, the last witness to that frightful event passed away. Mrs. Joseph Sayers nee Mary Rose Pritchard was born at Rocky

Mountain House on February 12, 1874. Her parents were John Pritchard and Rose Delorme. At the time of the massacre her father was working as an interpreter for the Indian Agent at Frog Lake and Mary Rose, then only eleven years old, was in her father's house with four brothers and three sisters.

Mary Rose saw it happen right in front of her home.¹ There Wandering Spirit shot down Thomas Quinn, the Indian Agent. Quinn was of mixed Irish, French and Sioux blood.² The killing of Quinn started the shooting which took the lives of eight other men. The men killed besides Quinn were John Delaney, farm instructor; John C. Gowanlock, partner of R.C. Laurie of Battleford in the construction of a combined flour and saw mill;³ George Dill, a trader; John Williscraft, a mechanic working at the mission; William C. Gilchrist, Gowanlock's clerk; Charles Gouin, a carpenter working at the agency; and the two French priests Leon Adelard Fafard and Felix Marie Marchand.⁴

One white man, William B. Cameron, a clerk for James K. Simpson agent for the Hudson's Bay Company escaped the massacre and lived to write its story under the heading of Blood Red the Sun. Cameron, while recognizing that he probably owed his survival to several friendly Indians felt that he owed special thanks to Louis Patenaude, the Cree step-son of his superior, James K. Simpson, for food and shelter and protection during the two months of captivity.⁵ In his book Cameron tells something of the part played by John Pritchard and his wife in the events of that day and the subsequent two months of captivity. Pritchard was absent from his house at the time Quinn and Gouin were shot⁶ but he got back to the house while Wandering Spirit was some distance off shooting down the Priest Fafard.⁷ When Wandering Spirit returned to Pritchard's house he found his entrance barred by Mrs. Pritchard who told him to be gone and that he had done enough mischief for one day. Whatever Wandering Spirit's real intentions were, Pritchard in later years assured his descendants that he was certain Wandering Spirit had intended to shoot him also. Though he had Indian blood Pritchard also had English blood and, besides, he was the interpreter for the Agent Quinn and, therefore, an enemy.⁸ But Rose (Delorme) Pritchard was of French and Indian blood; and she was a brave and resolute woman.

PICTURE WITH CAPTION:

Left to right: Joseph Sayer, Mary Rose Pritchard Sayer,
Solomon Pritchard, 1962

How it happened is no longer known, but when the Pritchards were forced out of their home before it was burned, they were able to set themselves up in a large "A" tent.⁹ Solomon, the eldest was 16, John Jr. was nearly 14, Mary Rose was 11, Amelia (Emily) was 10, Adeline was 8, Ralph was 6, Fred was 4, and Margaret was about 4 months. There is no doubt that although they were a scared and unhappy family they kept their

heads. John Pritchard shortly began to be concerned for the welfare of the unfortunate widows of Gowanlock and Delaney. While many a man in his position would have left them to their fate as unwilling wives of the murderer of their husbands, Pritchard was so filled with compassion that he urgently pondered how he might accomplish their release. In this he was fortunate to have the aid of Adolphus Nolin, another mixed blood of French and Indian ancestry, who was his confidant and friend and who was equally concerned.¹⁰

Obviously the English¹¹ blood in John Pritchard was a hindrance to his making progress toward the rescue of the women. Nolin being part French, they believed would be reasonably safe so he made his way among the tents of the Indians. In the tent of Manichoos, one of the murderers, he found Mrs. Delaney, cowering and ashen white, among his Cree wives. Adroitly Nolin manoeuvred Manichoos into offering to sell Mrs. Delaney to Nolin. She was "not young" he admitted; "neither is she pretty." So he would not ask much -- maybe two horses. That, of course, was a fearful price. Nolin had a pony but it was not enough. So he hurried back to John Pritchard, who didn't hesitate to add one of his two horses to Nolin's horse. Fortunately the Indian had not changed his mind, nor had another Indian bought her so Nolin shortly returned with Mrs. Delaney and she was added to the eleven or more people already in Pritchard's tent.¹²

The next question was what had become of 19 year old Mrs. Gowanlock? This time he sought the aid of Pierre Blondin,¹³ another French metis, who had worked for Gowanlock. So he went in search of the unfortunate widow. There was only one horse left but John Pritchard had \$30.00. So for one horse and \$30.00 Blondin secured her freedom.¹⁴

But were the women really safe? The Indians took the view that they could acquire wives by barter or as trophies of war. It would be perfectly proper for them to steal them or take them again from Pritchard. So John Pritchard, his wife, his sons Solomon and John Jr., as well as Adolphus Nolin, had to maintain an around the clock vigil to protect the women.¹⁵ For two months these brave and selfless people (half-breeds!) guarded the distraught and helpless widows day and night. On more than one occasion the situation was extremely "delicate," and as Cameron reports, they were never reimbursed for their outlay let alone rewarded.¹⁶

For two months John Pritchard, Solomon, John Jr., Mary Rose, the smaller children, Adolphus Nolin, and the widows were forced to suffer with Big Bear's camp as it moved, first into battle, and then in retreat, through the bush, swamp, snow, rain and mosquitoes of April and May until Big Bear's camp disintegrated and the swaggering painted war chiefs released the prisoners. It should be noted that the Pritchards, Nolin, Cameron, and the J.K. Simpsons were not the only prisoners of Big Bear's unmanageable warriors. They also had as prisoners the Hudson's Bay Company Trader from Fort Pitt, W.J. McLean and his numerous family, one of whom was 8 year old Duncan. In addition they had brought in John Fitzpatrick, the Farming

Instructor at Cold Lake, as well as H.R. Halpin, the Hudson's Bay Company Agent and the Rev. Pete LeGoff. From Onion Lake they had George G. Mann, the farming instructor, and his family, and the Anglican Minister, Rev. Chas. Quinney and his family. They had also the rest of the Hudson's Bay Company staff from abandoned and looted Fort Pitt.¹⁷

Following the collapse of the "Rebellion", John Pritchard and his wife were witnesses at the trials at Battleford and at Regina. After the trials John Pritchard took a homestead at Bresaylor. While developing his homestead he also taught school at Little Pine and Red Pheasant reserves and he did some freighting. John and Rose had another son born to them on the 23 of November, 1892. He they proudly called William after John's father. William grew up to be a handsome big man and a good businessman. For many years he was prominent in the business affairs of Battleford, where he now lives in retirement.

About 1895 John's wife, Rose, developed tuberculosis. John had heard of someone in Medicine Hat who was able to effect marvelous cures so he sold his Bresaylor farm and stock, loaded his family into carts or wagons and headed across country to Medicine Hat. Alas, it was a false hope and they returned to Battleford, where Rose died in March of 1897.

Though John had spent his all in the effort to save his wife, he somehow managed to secure a half section of land in the Prongua district. There, over a period of years, he not only raised his younger children but also built a sizable herd of good horses of considerable value. But prosperity was not for John. His horses contracted "pink-eye." One after the other their heads hung down and they died. That was bad enough, but to add to the problem was the requirement that the dead horses be buried deep in the soil. One hundred years from now, or one thousand, excavators may find the skeleton's [sic] of John Pritchard's horses down deep in the soil of the Eagle Hills.

The loss of the horses was too much. John was broke and dispossessed. Besides, he was no longer young. At the Indian Industrial School on the hill south of old Battleford the Principal, superintendent, and manager was none other than his distant cousin, Rev. Edward K. Matheson. Mr. Matheson one day needed an assistant farm instructor for the summers and a night watchman and fireman for the winters. John was elected to both positions. What an assistant farm instructor was is not clear but the night watchman-fireman bit is clear enough. First of all, all the houses, and the rooms in the houses, as well as some of the outbuildings, were heated by wood-burning stoves. Since wood has a habit of disappearing astonishingly fast in winter weather, firing or feeding these stoves with wood was a tiresome steady occupation. On top of that, of course, the stoves were a constant danger and concern, for they could become too enthusiastic in their efforts to keep the rooms warm. They were then said to be "overheated" and overheated stoves or stove pipes frequently caused the house to be burned

down. So John was a watchman.

Though the school never did burn down, it did shut down in 1914. As an institution it had outlived its usefulness. John was again out of a job. Moreover, because he was ever generous toward his large and struggling family and particularly to his son John Jr., (Black Jack) he had precious little money. At 73 years of age he needed a new job. Mr. Risdale, an old acquaintance, had started a clothing store and later a grocery department. He gave Pritchard work and there "gentleman Johnny" was a well-loved and respected clerk and generally useful man for the rest of his working life. In his childhood John was schooled at Red River for the ministry of the Anglican Church. How much education he actually received, or where, and why he abandoned that objective, are now mysteries. He was a fairly well-educated man, and in earlier years he served the Government in several capacities. He had a great love for his Bible, which he read every day and knew so well that callers interested in converting him to some sect by quoting the Bible out of context were frequently discomfited.

As a young man John Pritchard had worked in the offices of Urbaine Delorme a free trader. Where that was is not clear but it was probably at St. Francis Xavier.¹⁸ There John learned not only to trade, but also to keep the records. There he must have made the acquaintance of Delorme's daughter Rose. As so often happens, the boss was not happy when his daughter went ahead anyway and married the servant on May 5, 1863, at the St. Francis Xavier Church. With his marriage John ceased to be a servant -- he was fired.¹⁹

What John did after that is not clear but he must have gone to Rocky Mountain House, probably as an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. There Solomon, John Jr., and Mary Rose were born. And from there he seems to have gone to Frog Lake in 1875, for Amelia (Emily) was born there April 17, 1875. It is doubtful if he stayed at Frog Lake continuously until 1885, for Adelaide (Adele) and Raphael are supposed to have been born at Red Deer River in Saskatchewan and Alfred (Fred) and Margaret (Maggie) at Battleford -- all before 1885.

The story of Joseph Sayers, the husband of Mary Rose Pritchard, seems to begin with a John Sayer born about 1750, possibly at Montreal, of English background. He was engaged in the fur trade as an agent of the North West Company and was for a time proprietor in charge of Fond du Lac. Apparently he married a French Canadian half-breed woman. One of their sons was Pierre Guillaume Sayer who was born about 1795 somewhere in the Northwest.²⁰ He was baptized at St. Boniface on July 18, 1832 and married at St. Francis Xavier on March 2, 1835 to Josephine Frobisher, daughter of Alexander Frobisher and his Indian wife Marguerite. Pierre became one of the farmers, traders, hunters and freighters who made up part of the population of the Red River Settlement.

Generally it is indicated that the fur trade was ended with the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North

West Company. But it was hardly so for west of the Great Lakes the American Fur Company was a distressing influence. Though the Hudson's Bay Company did not withdraw from the Mississippi and the Missouri country for many years, they had to contend with the American Fur Company and numerous free traders for the business they received. They had no chartered monopoly there and it could not be kept a secret from the Red River settlers and the metis that it might be profitable to bypass the Hudson's Bay Company posts and trade with people south of the 49th parallel. In the early years following the union this temptation was not too strong but as time went on free traders started penetrating the Hudson's Bay Company country. Then George Simpson hit on the happy expedient of licensing Cutbert Grant, Andrew McDermott and James Sinclair to trade on their own but to bring their furs to the Company. They and others also were kept busy as freighters for the Company.

This ploy worked while the economy was relatively under control but in 1843 the Chief Factor, Duncan Finlayson, refused to renew the McDermott and Sinclair freighting contracts. This made a lot of people angry both on the Red and the Assinibone -- even in the Scotch settlement. So it is not surprising that Norman W. Kittson of St. Paul got the message and arrived in Red River in December of the same year. Nor is it surprising that he opened a trading post at Pembina the next summer. Both French and British half-breeds were so discomfited in the economic struggle that they, quite determinedly if quite illegally, entered the fur trade in numbers. When they did not dispose of their furs to Kittson at Pembina they took them to St. Paul or to St. Peters away to the south.²¹

Naturally the Hudson's Bay Company and the Council of Assinibouia reacted with all the means provided by its charter. Houses and premises were searched for furs, cart trains were stopped and searched, mail was made subject to inspection, higher duties were imposed on goods from the United States and furs were seized whenever they were found. The Scotch settlers wanted to do things legally. They petitioned. But the company was desperate. So were the settlers.²² They needed food; they needed markets; they needed money. So the half-breeds and metis defied the laws. As the year 1848 wore on the new Chief Factor, John Ballenden, decided he had to make a show of enforcing the laws of trade. So he laid charges against Guillaume Sayer and Angus McGillis of St. Francis Xavier and someone named Laronde and Alexis Goulet from the Red above the Forks.²³ Why only those four is not clear. Perhaps he did not want to take on the whole of the half-breed and metis population. But he might as well have planned it that way; for it is what really happened.

Numerous writers have described the event, with varying details, occurrences, and inaccuracies. For some reason or other Guillaume Sayer seemed to be the first one on the list. Only he was arrested, imprisoned, and released on bail. The others merely put on bail.²⁴ It is said the authorities dared not arrest others.²⁵ One could make a long story of the ineptitude of the Governor, the indiscretions of the

Chelsea Pensioners who were there in place of the troops to help support the court, the dislike of Recorder Thom by all the metis, the failing power of Cuthbert Grant to control the metis and half-breeds, the growing belief that the company's charter and its monopoly of trade were invalid and the metis half-breed belief that they with the Indians were the owners of the country and were not responsible to the Company. But it will be sufficient here to record the events of May 17, 1849, when the accused were summoned to trial.

May 17, 1849, was Ascension Day. Because all the metis would be going to Mass on the other side of the river from the Fort that morning, the day was set deliberately by Recorder Thom on the assumption the metis would then not be free to make trouble. But it was a tremendous tactical error. The metis did indeed all go to Mass. They went early; they were purposeful; and they were armed. A comparative newcomer to the area, Louis Riel Sr., addressed them. They organized themselves, and they crossed over the River to the house of Sheriff Alexander Ross to tell him a few things: there was going to be no punishment for either Sayer or the others. Then with him they approached the court. Ross was an observant man. And what he observed was that there were 377 men with guns and numerous others "armed with other missiles of every description."²⁶

It wasn't a very good atmosphere in which to hold court and it quickly became obvious that this court was going to make history of some kind. When Sayer was called at eleven o'clock he did not appear. "He, with the other offenders, was held in close custody by an armed force of their countrymen outdoors, and we were not so imprudent as to direct the application of force, or even to insist on his bail bringing him forward," says Sheriff Ross.²⁷ So the Court busied itself with other things. At one o'clock it called for Sayer again. But again he did not show. So the court decided to send out a message that the half-breeds might name a leader and send in a deputation to assist Sayer.²⁸ James Sinclair was appointed spokesman and twelve entered, leaving their arms with some twenty others who stood just outside the door. Sinclair was permitted to act as counsel for Sayer, a jury was formed with difficulty, and the trial proceeded.

Whether anyone was really surprised or not is not recorded; but Sayer's young son Louison testified that his father had traded furs, and Sayers himself admitted he had traded furs and that John Edward Harritt, a Chief Factor of the Company, had outfitted him. So the jury dutifully brought in a verdict of "guilty of trading in furs." Then Donald Gunn, foreman of the jury, asked Chief Factor Ballenden to extend "mercy" in view of Sayers and the others, holding the view that they were doing so with permission. Ballenden expressed satisfaction that the principle had been upheld and withdrew the charges against the other three.²⁹

"Not a word was said whether the half-breeds were, or were not to trade furs in future."³⁰ But when the juror, Ducharme, reached the door he shouted: "Le Commerce est

libre!"³¹ The 400 or so assembled there believed it, too, and proceeded to put on a show of happiness. What is more, the Company officers discovered they believed it -- the Charter notwithstanding. Trade was free. And Guillaume Sayer, the accidental vehicle for it all, as well as dozens of others henceforth practiced it in that part of Rupert's Land and some of them grew rich.

Pierre Guillaume Sayer, sometimes called William, did not live too long. Both he and his wife seem to have died before 1870 but they left a family of nine. Though the family scattered in 1882, Harry, Cleophas, and Joseph joined with Taylors, Bremners, Spences, and others to go to Edmonton, the booming land of promise.³² The trip across the prairies with cattle, horses, machinery, household effects, and numerous wives and children took a long time so when they got about 30 miles west of Battleford, still the capital of the North West Territories, they decided it was too late in the season to go further. They stopped, put up hay and prepared winter quarters for themselves. By the next spring they had decided they were well satisfied with the spot where they were. It had everything they needed. So they proceeded to build permanent homes -- and to call the place Bresaylor -- a compound of parts of three family names. Joined by more Spences, Fidlers, Morrisons, Swaynes, Taites and others in that season of 1883, they quickly made Bresaylor a name to remember.

Of the Sayers who arrived in 1882 we are chiefly interested in Harry. There are two reasons for that: first, he married twice, first to Mary Bremner and second to Elsie Beauchaine and fathered 21 children; second, one of the children born to his first wife at Headingly on January 1, 1870 was Joseph. It will not be surprising that Harry Sayer was a freighter when he lived in Manitoba. Following the "freeing of trade," he made many trips to St. Paul, St. Cloud, Georgetown or to Pembina. Though freighting in the Red River area was no longer plentiful there was lots of it at Battleford and Bresaylor. First from Qu'Appelle, and then from Swift Current, to Battleford, Prince Albert, Green Lake, Onion Lake, Fort Pitt, Frog Lake, Cold Lake, Edmonton, St. Albert, Lac Ste. Anne and Athabasca. Harry had equipment and he had boys. At an unbelievably young age, his son Joseph was travelling in all directions.

In 1885 Joseph was 15. That practically made him a man. Without commenting on his age, Inspector Francis Dickens of the N.W.M.P. at Fort Pitt on February 10, 1885, recorded in his diary "Joe Sayers arrived from Battleford with freight for Indian Department," and then that, "Sayers brothers left for Frog Lake." How "Joe Sayers" became "Sayers brothers" so quickly is not explained. On February 16 he records: "Sayers Bros. (freighters) passed in route to Battleford after delivering freight at Frog Lake."³³

If Inspector Dickens had had even a little bit of the imagination and story telling ability of his famous father he would have told that "Sayers Bros" had come all the way from

Swift Current with two huge mill stones on two sleighs, in winter, through wide open and unfenced country where it would be easy to be caught in a blizzard and to become lost, where there was a great scarcity of wood for fuel, where all the water for man and beast was frozen, and where in that winter there was a great scarcity of snow for sleighs. He would also have recorded that the boys were under a contract to deliver the huge stones to the Roman Catholic Mission at Frog Lake by a certain date or suffer penalties and would have commented on what a bad time they had on side hills getting from Fort Pitt to Frog Lake and the skill with which they extracted themselves from near disaster. Of course, he would have had to record that the people who were to build the mill were all murdered on April 2, 1885, and that the stones lay where they were unloaded for ever and ever thereafter.³⁴ But Inspector Dickens was not a writing man. Why, even on April 15, when the police with great hardship crossed the river and fled toward Battleford in a hastily made scow, all he said was: "Very cold weather. Travelled."

The people of Bresaylor were of mixed blood and the people around Batoche expected that they were going to join in the 1885 uprising. It came as a shock to Riel and to quite a few others that most of the Bresaylor people were not inclined that way at all. As at Winnipeg fifteen years earlier, the Scotch half-breeds did not suffer from the same persecution complex as did the metis. So the Bresaylor people quickly found themselves in the centre of considerable attention and pressure. Joubert, the school teacher at Bresaylor, and allegedly the only one there in sympathy with Riel and his supporters, had sent word to the rebels that the Bresaylor people had no intention of joining them.³⁵ They were rich in cattle and possessions and stood to gain nothing, but to lose much.

Riel and his Council were desperately trying to get all the Indians and all the half-breeds and metis from all over the west to join them. Indeed, only by that means could they succeed at all. Messengers were sent everywhere. Very persuasive ones, too. The Stonies from Poundmaker's Reserve were easy victims. Under the heavy influence of a group of agitators that had come from Duck Lake they became impossible to control. They terrorized the countryside, killed James Payne and Barney Freeman, and, under a man from Duck Lake by the name of Norbert Delorme, forced the Bresaylor people to go to Poundmaker's Reserve.³⁶

The Bresaylor people had been advised to go into the barracks at Battleford but they could not believe their danger. Finally some of them, particularly the Taylors, did go in, less for protection than to exhibit tangible proof of loyalty. Most of the rest including the Sayers family -- Harry, Alexander, Joseph, and all the rest of Harry's first family were too slow, or too anxious to stay home and protect their possessions. By implication they were rebels. The people in Battleford reviled them. To complete the irony of their situation, when they ceased to be prisoners of the Indians they became prisoners of the Government. On July 4 Henry and Baptiste Sayer were

charged with high treason, but the charges were dismissed by Francis J. Dickens acting as Justice of the Peace. As if that were not enough, they were then charged with treason felony. But again they were discharged as there was no case against them.³⁷

Following the rebellion the people of Bresaylor began the painful task of restoring their economic position as well as their social position. The cattle the Indians did not eat and the household effects not destroyed by them were frequently taken or destroyed by the volunteers who had come to restore law and order.³⁸

Henry Sayers, and his sons Alex and Joseph were hard put to make a new start. There was a lot of freighting to do for every settler in the country was in want of food, clothing, shoes, crockery, and house furnishings. Many needed new homes and all the supplies had to be brought from Swift Current. Henry Sayers was able to rebuild his freighting outfits and he and the boys were soon back on the trail to Swift Current. The Sayers also set to work to make good the destruction of property on their farms. Fortunately their houses had not been burned but just looted.

Now, if you will recall, John Pritchard took a homestead at Bresaylor after the rebellion. So there in that community it was not unusual that young Joseph Sayers should meet the attractive and intelligent Mary Rose Pritchard. As frequently happens when boy meets girl it was not long until they found they had more in common than the rewards of freighting or of raising chickens. On January 6, 1890, Father Vachon out on the Sweet Grass Reserve united in marriage these two young people. There was a world of opportunity, adventure and enduring love and affection ahead.

When Joseph and Mary Rose celebrated their 75 wedding anniversary on January 6, 1965, they were a proud couple surrounded and supported by 9 of their 13 children; Joseph, Edward and Cecil, successful farmers at Bresaylor and Paynton; Harry a retired lawyer and civil servant at Edmonton; Leonard, chartered accountant and lawyer, Assistant Auditor General for Canada; Gordon, an orthodontist in Toronto; Lena, Hilda, and Helen, the wives of responsible businessmen. Also far too many grandchildren and great grandchildren to mention here. They celebrated their 76th anniversary on January 6, 1966, but on September 23, 1966 Joseph Sayers laid down the burden and entered into his rest. On December 27, 1970 his wife, Rose, the last living witness to the massacre at Frog Lake, died.

C.D. DENNEY.

NOTES

1. Harry Sayers, Edmonton, personal interview.
2. W.B. Cameron: Blood Red the Sun, Calgary; Kenway

Publishing, 1926, p. 61.

3. A.R. Turner, "The Letters of P.G. Laurie," Saskatchewan History, Vol. XIV, p. 48.
4. Cameron, op. cit., p. 62
5. Ibid., pp. 56, 79.
6. Harry Sayers, Edmonton, personal interview.
7. Cameron, op. cit., p. 62
8. Harry Sayers, Edmonton, personal interview.
9. Cameron, op. cit., p. 69.
10. Ibid., p. 68.
11. Cameron quotes John Prichard as saying he was Scotch and he may have thought he was. However, his grandfather, John Pritchard, was born in 1777 at Shrewsbury, England and came to the Lake Winnipeg area with the Montreal fur traders as early as 1801. In the winter of 1814-15 he made a journey from Montreal by way of James Bay to the Selkirk colony. After leaving the fur trade he became active in the Selkirk colony and for many years played a prominent part in the business, governmental, educational and religious life of that area. He had at least one son by his first wife, an Indian woman. This son, William, had a large family most of whom lived in the Fort Ellice -- St. Lazare -- Spy Hill area. One of his sons is the John Pritchard of this story.
12. Cameron, op. cit. p. 69.
13. Ibid., p. 70.
14. Ibid., pp. 61, 70. Joseph Hicks, "With Hatton's Scouts in Pursuit of Big Bear." Alberta Historical Review, Volume 18, No. 3, P. 19. Hicks states that they "found the two women in a camp of a half-breed named Pritchard who had bought them by paying four fine eastern heavy brood mares, harness and democrat." Mr. Hicks does not explain how John Pritchard would have the four heavy eastern horses and harness while serving as an interpreter at Frog Lake. It is doubtful if Indians at war would be interested in "heavy brood mares." Cameron, op. cit., p. 139 further confuses the story when he states that "Mrs. Delaney and Mrs. Gowanlock rode with Pritchard on his wagon when camp was moved." Cameron, p. 189 seems to say that Pierre Blondin secured Mrs. Gowanlock's release with his own horse and money and for his own purposes.
15. Cameron, op. cit., p. 70.
16. Ibid., p. 221.

17. Ibid., p. 100.
18. M.A. MacLeod and W.L. Morton: Cuthbert Grant of Grantown Warden of the Plains of Red River, Toronto, McClelland, 1963. p. 93.
19. William Pritchard, Battleford, personal interview.
20. W.S. Wallace: Documents Relating to the Northwest Company, Toronto, Champlain Society, 1934, p. 497.
21. MacLeod and Morton, op. cit., pp. 130-134.
22. Ibid., p.133.
23. Ibid., p. 134.
24. A. Ross: The Red River Settlement, Minneapolis, Ross and Haines, 1957, p. 373.
25. W.L. Morton: Manitoba -- A History, Toronto, University of Toronto, 1967, p. 77.
26. A. Ross, op. cit., p. 373.
27. Ibid., p. 373.
28. Ibid.
29. R. St. G. Stubbs: Four Recorders of Rupert's Land, Winnipeg, Peguis, 1967, pp. 28-29.
30. A. Ross, op. cit., p. 376.
31. R. St. G. Stubbs, op. cit., p. 30.
32. Arlean McPherson: The Battlefords: A History, Saskatoon, Modern Press, 1968, p. 58.
33. V. LaChance: Diary of Francis Dickens, Kingston, Jackson Press, 1930, p. 18.
34. Joseph Sayers, Bresaylor, personal interview.
35. Norma Sluman: Poundmaker, Toronto, Ryerson, 1967, p. 211.
36. Ibid., p. 213.
37. Canada, Sessional Papers, 1886 No. 8, pp. 103, 111.
38. R. Jefferson, Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan, Canadian North-West Historical Society Publications, Volume 1, No. V., p. 159.

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- account of rescue of Mrs. Delaney and Mrs. Gowanlock
- John Pritchard's last days
- argument for monument to John Pritchard

ARTICLES CONTINUED...

Unity Herald and Weekly Star, June 24, 1936

CAPTIVES OF BIG BEAR

by Jean Ritchie

FEW episodes in the North West Rebellion of 1885 aroused more public interest and sympathy than the captivity in the camp of Big Bear, of Mrs. Gowanlock and Mrs. Delaney. Neither

of these ladies had been very long in the west and both had spent their early life in eastern Ontario.

Mrs. Gowanlock had been married the October before to Mr. Alexander Gowanlock, a Toronto (?) who was engaged by the Government to build mills on the Indian reserves near Frog Lake in what were then the North West Territories. It was while Mr. Gowanlock was east procuring supplies that he was married. He had many interests in the West having tried his hand at being farmer, mill-(?), speculator, vendor, store-keeper and mill owner. His greatest success had been in Battleford where he had a store.

Mrs. Delaney had been brought up near (?), her grandmother having established the family on a farm on the Aylmer River more than seventy years before the start of the North West Rebellion. Her husband came from the same locality, and had been in the lumber business before going out west. It was some of the big lumbermen of the Ottawa Valley who recommended Mr. Delaney for the post of mill instructor in the North West. He had been three years in the West when he took his bride there in 1882. His first winter was passed at Onion Lake, for the Frog Lake district was then still a wilderness. When Mr. Gowanlock arrived with his bride in the late autumn of 1884 the Delaneys were well established. Even in those two years the way of getting to the west had changed. The Delaneys had come by way of Sarnia to Chicago and from there to St. Paul, and on to Winnipeg. From Winnipeg they travelled by the Canadian Pacific line to Brandon, from there they took the construction (?) to Troy. The rest of the trip was by (?) over the prairie. The Gowanlocks took the C.P.R. to Owen Sound, and there they boarded a boat which took them to Port Arthur. From Port Arthur they travelled by train to Winnipeg and on as far as Swift Current. There they procured a (?) of provisions for their trip across the prairie.

It was a hundred and ninety-five miles from there to Battleford, their next objective, and they travelled by buckboard. For four nights they lived under canvas and in the

daytime they passed several prairie caravans drawn by oxen and driven by half-breeds and Indians. Mrs. Gowanlock stayed in Battleford six weeks, while her husband went on to Frog Lake, where he had thirteen men working on (?) and mills.

On the trip from Battleford to her home, Mrs. Gowanlock met many whose names were afterwards mentioned in the reports when the trouble began. Mr. Ballentyne, of Battleford, accompanied the couple as far as Fort Pitt, and they spent a night at the home of Mr. McLean. The next morning they left for Onion Lake and there they were welcomed by Mr. Mann and his family. After a night's rest they proceeded to Frog Lake.

The Delaneys were overjoyed to receive the newcomers. The Gowanlock home was two miles farther on, and while her husband went over to do some last fixing of furniture, Mrs. Gowanlock remained to cheer her new friend with news of the outside world. A little of the atmosphere may be had from a peep at Mrs. Delaney's story of the time:

"Ours was a happy home," she wrote, "I grew to like my surroundings, I became fond of my Indian proteges, and to crown all, in December last, Mrs. Gowanlock came to live near us. I felt that even though a letter from home should be delayed, that I would never feel as lonesome as before. My husband was generous to a fault. He was liked by all the bands -- our white neighbors were few, but they were splendid people, fast and true friends, and I might say since Mrs. Gowanlock arrived I felt at home: I looked upon the place as my own, and the Indian children as my children, the same as my husband looked upon the men as his care, and they regarded him as a father. It was no longer to be a lonely life. It was to become a life of usefulness, joy, labor, peace and contentment. Such was the vision of the future I had about the middle of last winter.

Mrs. Gowanlock's home nestled in a pretty valley, on Frog Creek. There was a simple house, a store, and beside the brook, the mill. The only sound to be heard was the noise of the workman's hammer, and its echo brought back from the hills around. The nearest white neighbors were at Frog Lake settlement, two miles away, but there were others close by. The day after the bride arrived they all came in to shake hands with her, and to chat in Cree, of which language she knew very little.

The Indians supplied the Gowanlocks with fish all winter, twice a week. In return they received sugar, tea, and prints, etc. from the store. Though the thermometer went as low as sixty degrees below zero, the air was so bracing that it did not seem as cold as an Ontario winter. Mrs. Gowanlock thought the country the most beautiful she had ever seen, and everything seemed to point to a peaceful and happy future.

Writing at that time, she said: "Nothing of an eventful nature transpired during those two months, the mill was about completed and Williscraft and the other men were discharged with the exception of Mr. Gilchrist, who assisted my husband. The machinery was all in position and everything done but finishing up, when on the seventh of March, two men, strangers, made their appearance at the mill and asked for employment. They said they were weary and worn and had left Duck Lake in order to avoid the trouble that was brewing there. One was Gregory Donaire and the other Peter Blondin; my husband took pity on them and gave them employment. They worked for us until the massacre. They were continually going to and

PICTURE WITH CAPTION: John Pritchard guarding the captive
ladies, Mrs. Gowanlock and Mrs. Delaney

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(Photocopy has words missing on the right and left of this article)

JOHN PRITCHARD PIONEER OF PRE-REBELLION DAYS
CROSSES GREAT DIVIDE

... OF FAMOUS PLAINSMAN RECALLS STIRRING DAYS OF WAR,
... WAR, INTRIGUES, FRIENDSHIP, AND THE HARD-
SHIPS OF OLDTIMERS

Author, William Bleasdel
... written of Adolphus Nolin
... John Pritchard, two heroes
... , of first-hand knowledge.
... day of the massacre, Cam-
... employees of the Hudson's
..Company post, was captured.
... his life to his acquaintance
... Indians. He was a prisoner
..months before making his es-

By

... M BLEASDELL CAMERON

... Pritchard is dead.

... a handful of Canada's six
... million of understanding
... these four words mean any-
... They should mean a great
... all of them.

... after noon on the 2nd of
... 5, two men, mugs of strong
... in their hands, sat in a
... Oncepphayo's reserve at Frog
... the old Northwest Territor-
...Canada. Their hands shook as
...allowed the tea in great gulps
... ly their nerves, after being
... illing and stunned witnesses
... htful scene of blood. One was

What Of The Women?

... der what's happened to the
... It will be terrible for them.
... be possible, do you think,
... help them in any way?"
... e got to!" The short man's
... doggedly. "They can't be left
... mercy of these demons." He
... and looked at his companion.
... n Scotch--the white in me--
... who speak English are not
... with these Indians today. I
... all right, but I may not. I
... ow. I wish I did. They may
... here any minute, the devils,
... me out without giving me
... say good-bye to my family
... in half expecting that. But
... French--in part; you're not
... ch danger. They'll be afraid
..you; Riel might be angry. Find
... has the women. Then we'll
... can't get them out of these
... hands, somehow."

... young man left the tent.
.....
... er Indians he learned that
... he women was in the lodge
... hoose, a murderer of that
... rning, with his Cree wives.

... dark, smooth-faced, athletic
... of twenty-five; the other a
... compactly-built, black-whisk-
... man past forty, with an even
... Said one:
... the Indian's lodge. He did
... than glance at the white
... cowering there, dazed by
... and grief, her face deathly
... wide eyes mirroring the
... that sudden blow that had
... needed her when her beloved
... fell dying at her side, a
... as before. It would not
... for Nolin to appear as a
... the poor, distraught mooni-
... Instead, he said casually,
... you have a white wife now."
... The Indian nodded. "Uh-huh." He
... important though he was
... not to show it.

... are lucky," Nolin pursued.
... look at me. Here am I, a man
... yet I have no white wife.
... I get (?). No wonder you
.....

Manichoose was flattered, but he raised a deprecating
hand. "I am not proud," he objected. "What is a wife, more or
less to me? If you want this white woman, I will sell her to
you."

Nolin shook his head. He sighed. "No. You would want
too much. I am very poor. I could not buy her."

"You may have her for two horses," said the Indian.

"Two horses? I knew I could not buy her. That is a
fearful price. I have only one horse. I will pay it for her."

"Two horses," the Indian insisted stolidly.

Nolin rose. "Wait a little," he said, "perhaps I can get
another. Then I will buy her."

Passing out, he spoke for the first time in an even voice
to the white woman: "Take courage! Don't despair. You shan't
be harmed. I'll get you away from this fellow."

He went back to his companion, John Pritchard -- "Johnny"
Pritchard always to his friends, the kindly, simple, Scotch
halfbreed native of Manitoba, who died the other day.

"He wants two horses for Mrs. Delaney," Nolin told
Johnny. "He won't take less. And I've only one."

Uses Cunning

... (Adolphus Nolin was the
... man's name -- he lives at
... Lake, Saskatchewan, today)

"Well, it's all right," Pritchard answered. "I've two. Take one of mine."

Pritchard had secured a large A tent, the property of the Hudson's Bay Company at Frog Lake, earlier in the day. He had set it up in the Indian camp and installed his wife and family of young children.

Nolin took the two horses to the lodge of Manichoose, tied them to the cart outside and entered. He came out with Mrs. Delaney and escorted her to Pritchard's tent.

Mrs. Gowanlock Bought

A little later the two men induced a third halfbreed, Pierre Blondin, to purchase the release of Mrs. Gowanlock from her Indian captor for a horse and \$30. She also was lodged in Pritchard's tent. Blondin's subsequent conduct eliminated him as deserving of the praise due the others.

For two months these two faithful and intrepid halfbreeds, Pritchard and Nolin, guarded the afflicted and helpless white women day and night and kept them safe from the Indians.

Nolin slept across the door of the tent. One night -- he was just dropping to sleep -- he awoke suddenly vaguely conscious that someone had stepped over him in the dark. He sat up and struck a match. Two Plains Indians, Nacotan and Nacesoo, squatted between him and the white women. In the momentary flash he noticed on the ground alongside Nacotan a Winchester. The match flickered out, and in the succeeding blackness Nolin stretched forth a stealthy hand and slid the rifle to that side of him farthest from the Indian.

A lamp was lit. Genevieve, a halfbreed girl, roused by the men's voices, came in from an adjoining tent. "Shame on you!" she cried, in Cree, to the Indians. "Let these poor women alone, you skunks!"

Steals Gun

Nacotan missed his gun. His uneasiness showed itself when he discovered it in the hands of Nolin.

Eventually, the Indians were induced to leave. The inducements consisted in the fact that the Indian wanted his

gun and could not recover it on any other condition: but also, they received a payment of tobacco and clothing.

When General Strange struck the Indians on May 28th at Frenchman's Butte, the two women, with the aid of Pritchard and other halfbreeds got safely into his camp. To a newspaper reporter, Mrs. Delaney said:

"I was put into an Indian tent and left there until nightfall, when John Pritchard came and purchased my release

with horses, and I believe both Mrs. Gowanlock and myself owe to him our escape from terrible treatment and subsequent death. On four different nights Indians approached our tent, but the determination of Pritchard and some other halfbreeds saved us."

That Mrs. Delaney, stunned as she was by the shocking events of the day, should have been somewhat confused as to the exact details of what happened, is not surprising. Her release came only four hours after the tragedy, or sometime before nightfall, and while both had a part in arranging it, Nolin, and not Pritchard, actually accomplished her deliverance and brought her out of Manichoose's lodge.

Praises Pritchard

Mrs. Gowanlock supported Mrs. Delaney in regard to Pritchard in the following words:

"Like Mrs. Delaney, I dread to imagine the treatment to which we would have been subjected had it not been for Pritchard."

The government of the day very justly awarded pensions to these poor women, so cruelly widowed. Had it not been for Pritchard, they would never have needed pensions: they would not have lived to require them. Pritchard, to the day of his death, was never awarded anything, and of course now he never can be. Efforts were to be made this year to secure some compensation. His heroic part in caring, at no little danger to himself, for these white women went unrecognized.

His only reward ...
the satisfaction of which no one
could deprive him--the consciousness
of a good act faithfully and ...
performed.

I called on him a day or two be-
fore he died. I told him--what ...
Kennedy intended trying to ...

...
already knew -- that Mr. ...
the government in his case, and ...
we who were familiar with the ...
he had played were prepared to ...
him any support in our power. ...
given a small pension--\$25. a month
even, say--he would be protected...
against actual want at least in ...
old age. The flame of life was ...
ing low, pain racked his ...
frame, but his homely face light...
He was pleased and gratified. ...
the fact that at least he was to...
recognition, even more than the ...

seized him. He shivered all night ...
roused no one: he hated to be ...
trouble. Next day he was severely ...
ill. The doctor was called. Johnny..
he said, was suffering from ...
bronchitis. On the afternoon of ...
tember 13, beautiful warm ...
he drifted peacefully out--to his ...
ward in another world. He got

in this.

It would have been a gracious ...
on the part of the Canadian govern-
ment to recognize Pritchard's ...
service by a small pension during
his lifetime. It didn't. This year..
is erecting handsome cairns com-
memorating dramatic and significant
events in the history of Canad ...
West. One is at Frog Lake, ...
nine men, including the husbands ...
these two white women were ...

of money, particularly satisfied...

Suggests Memorial

His illness seemed to give him... sense of shame. He said to me:

"I am not much like what I was... when you saw me last."

He was eighty-five when he died. Despite his age, he was still ... able to work and proud of it. He.. frequently employed at odd jobs ... the old town of Battleford, where.. lived. On Friday of the week before he was working about the grounds of the town hall. The day ... warm and he perspired profusely. Mr. Adams, the town secretary, ... monstrated with the old man, ... told that he was working ... hard--to take it easier. He was,... Johnny did not think so.

At 9:30 that evening he went ... the newstand to buy a paper. ... after he went to bed a severe ...

Why not a monument to Pritchard? Probably no single event ... those troubled days of '85 was ... deeply significant, more worthy ... permanent remembrance, than ... splendid service rendered to ... two defenceless and unfortunate ... white women from the East by ... Pritchard, the sterling halfblood na- ... tive of the old West. Oblivion ... not be allowed to overtake ... deeds as his. They are a part of ... heritage. They should be commem- ... orated in bronze as an inspiration ... future generations of Canadian youth.

Pritchard deserves a monument ... more than his protection of the ... white women. He was a ... servant of the government ... deserter. He stood, on this ... of April, at grave personal ...

himself, at his post beside the ... agent, performing his duty of ... in the face of intimidative ... threats from infuriated savages ... till Quinn fell at his feet before.. assassin's bullet.

Pritchard deserves a monument. Let him have it! This would not ... generosity--it is too late for that Call it selfishness if you choose... the patriotic spirit and pride ... jealously says that the bravery and high purpose of our heroic ... shall not go unrecorded. Pritchard was a true Canadian. His skin was.. dark, but his heart and his life were white. He was a good man, and we... should be proud that he was a pro-... duct of the good soil of Canada.

It is time that Pritchard's ... conduct receives the recognition ... deserves. The government cannot ... now reward him in person, but it possible, since it is too late to pen- sion him, to honour him in a more

enduring and important way. ...
monument to John Pritchard's ...
And it remains the only thing ...
we can give him.

(ARTICLE HAS A PHOTO OF JOHN PRITCHARD
AND OF ADOLPHUS NOLIN)

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