

Peter Warren Dease (1788-1863)

Peter was born at Michilimackinac on January 1, 1788, the son of Dr. John B. Dease and Jane French a Caughnawaga Mohawk. His father was a deputy superintendent of the Indian Department. Peter was the brother of John Dease. John Dease was a Chief Trader in the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies, stationed variously at Rainy Lake, Fort Alexander, Fort Nez Perce and Flathead Post. He died at the Dalles in 1830 while enroute to Fort Vancouver.

Peter married Elizabeth Chouinard (also Metis) on August 3, 1840 at St. Andrews, Red River. They had the following children:

- Anne Dease, married John Bell.
- Amelia Dease, born 1835.
- James Dease, twin, born 1835.
- Peter Warren Jr., born 1838, died 1853.
- Mathilda Dease, twin, born 1838.

Dease first worked for the XY Company at Great Slave Lake. After the XY Company's amalgamation with the North West Company in 1804, Dease was appointed to the position of clerk at Athabasca. In 1817 he was moved to the Mackenzie District, first at Fort Good Hope, then to Fort Chipewyan and other Mackenzie posts. In 1821, after the amalgamation of the North West Co. and the Hudson's Bay Co. he became a chief trader for the Hudson's Bay Company, working in the Athabasca district.

Dease was asked by George Simpson to mount an expedition to explore the Finlay River basin in 1823, with the goal of developing the fur trade in that region, however Dease was unable to undertake the expedition that year, and the task was reassigned to Samuel Black. In 1825 Dease was given the opportunity to participate in Sir John Franklin's second expedition to the Arctic.

After his return from the Franklin expedition, Dease took charge of Fort Good Hope, and was stationed there from 1827 to 1829. In 1828 he was appointed a Chief Factor in the Hudson's Bay Company, as well as member of the Council. He was charged with developing trade along the newly discovered Peel's River. He recommended a post be established at near the source of the river, but it was another decade before the Peel's Post was built. In 1829 Dease handed over Fort Good Hope to John Bell, and was stationed briefly at Fort Simpson. He spent the winter of that year at the newly constructed Fort Halkett, in an advisory capacity.

In 1830 he was appointed to Fraser Lake in the New Caledonia district. In 1835 Dease requested a leave of absence due to ill health. The leave was granted, after which he was placed in charge of a new Arctic expedition. From 1836 to 1839 he was placed in charge of a 12 man expedition to explore the Arctic coast of North America, from the mouth of the Mackenzie River to Point Barrow. They left on June 1, 1837, and arrived at Point Barrow on August 4. They wintered at Fort Confidence on Great Bear Lake then set out westward in the spring, mapping 100 miles of coastline. They again wintered at Fort Confidence, and in the spring of 1839 explored eastward. On August 16 they reached Montreal Island and discovered a cache of supplies left by George Black. Following the

expedition, Dease was given another leave of absence, from 1840 to 1841, during which time he married (August 3, 1840) and settled on a farm in Côte Sainte-Catherine, near Montreal. He retired from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1843. He remained at Côte Sainte-Catherine until his death on January 17, 1863. He and his wife, Elizabeth Chouinard, a Metis, had eight children: four sons and four daughters.

Chief Factor Archibald McDonald¹ records the following:

Mr. Dease was at the head of the Franklin Expedition of 1825-1827, in conducting it in all its working, details, commissariat, &c., leaving the higher work of taking observations and making notes by way, free and untrammelled, to Sir John Franklin. He did his work well, and ...Mr. Dease was at once promoted from his Chief Tradership to a Chief Factorship, which is a "double share," and entails no extra work.

It was for like service on the subsequent expedition(that of Dease and Simpson), of 1837-1839, which completed a survey of our North coast from Franklin's furthest, west of the Mackenzie, and also for much new discovery on the east side, and north of the Coppermine River, that knighthood, we have already alluded to, was offered to Mr. Dease. On his refusal of the honour, the Imperial government offered him a pension of a hundred pounds sterling. On his retirement in 1841-42, he settled in the immediate neighbourhood of Montreal, where even among the old tall Nor-Westers that used to then walk the streets of their old emporium, Mr. Dease, tall, straight and strong, and of noble mien, towered above the rest.



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¹ Archibald McDonald, *Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from the Hudson's Bay to the Pacific*. Ottawa: J. Drurie and son, 1872: 76.