

---

---

## Saskatchewan Metis Communities Historical Overview

---

---

**Edited and Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell**

**Battle River:** The Battle River (Notikiwin Seppe in Cree) originates south from Battle Lake in central Alberta, east of Winfield and flows east into Saskatchewan, where it discharges in the North Saskatchewan River at Battleford. Battle Lake, Samson Lake, Driedmeat Lake and Big Knife Lake are formed along the river. Battle River was named after a long time war between the Cree and Blackfoot bands over the hunting area. In the mid 1800s, several Métis families – the Salois and the Laboucanes, settled at Battle River, in Alberta, establishing a trade route for transporting merchandise in the famous Red River carts, as well as raising livestock and horses. Known as the Laboucane Settlement, many years later, it was renamed in honour of Bishop Thomas Duhamel from the Archdiocese of Ottawa. In 1881, Father Beillevaire was asked to start a mission along the south side of the Battle River. He named this settlement Duhamel, after Archbishop Duhamel of Ottawa. Metis' families had begun settlement as early as 1870 in Duhamel and in the valley of Battle River supplying Fort Edmonton with buffalo meat and supplies with their Red River carts along side their cousins, the Cree and Saulteaux Bands.

With the arrival of homesteaders in the region, in 1896, a number of the families from the Laboucane Settlement moved to new colony of Saint-Paul-des-Métis north of the Saskatchewan River with their large herds of livestock to join the other Métis settlers and because there were still large expenses of Crown lands available for pasture for their herds of horses and cattle.

**Battleford, Saskatchewan:** Battleford is located on the North Saskatchewan River just north of where the Battle River enters the Saskatchewan River. Early European settlement began as a result of fur trading by French traders in the late 18th century. The Canadians founded Fort Montaigne d'Aigle (Eagle Hills Fort) nine miles below the confluence of the Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers in 1778. A year later the fort was abandoned following conflict between traders and Indians. The fur trading post at Battleford was founded in 1875, it also served as a North West Mounted Police fort. Between 1876 and 1883, Battleford was the territorial capital of the North-West Territories. The NWMP fort located there played an important role in the 1885 North West Resistance.

**Batoche and St. Laurent-Grandin, Saskatchewan:** This Metis settlement along the South Saskatchewan River is named after Metis trader and businessman Xavier Letendré dit Batoche. It is located on the Carlton Trail, a Red River Cart trail. Batoche also operated a river ferry. François Xavier's grandfather, Jean Baptiste Letendré had been wintering in the Fort Carlton area since the late 1850s. The Metis fleeing Manitoba after the 1869-70 Resistance largely settled this town, along with St. Louis, St. Laurent, and Duck Lake. This was not the first Batoche community in Saskatchewan. The nickname was shared with François Xavier Letendré's grandfather, Jean-Baptiste Letendré who worked at Fort a la Corne in 1810. There are references to a Batoche Post about three miles west of the Forks of the Saskatchewan River and Jean-Baptiste Letendré is the likely source of the name.<sup>1</sup> Xavier Letendré dit Batoche had established a store in the vicinity of the St. Laurent mission on the west bank of the South Saskatchewan River in 1866. At that time all the wintering Metis were located on the west bank for easier access to Fort Carlton. The St. Laurent settlement on the west side also had easy access to the missions of St. Laurent and Sacre Coeur at Duck Lake. The first ferry crossing the south branch of the Saskatchewan River was established where the Carlton Trail crossed the river on the road to St. Laurent, Duck Lake and Fort Carlton. Xavier Letendré dit Batoche established this ferry in 1871. With the establishment of Batoche's ferry the river the Metis took up lots on the east side and this village became known as Batoche

**Birch Hills, Saskatchewan:** Birch Hills is located 40 km south-east of Prince Albert, it is south of the South Saskatchewan River. Birch Hills is directly to the east of the village of St. Louis. The history of Birch Hills dates back to around 1870 with the migration of Metis settlers from Manitoba, and other settlers from Ontario and Europe. Because of the hills to the south and east and the abundance of birch trees which covered the area, the hamlet was named Birch Hills.

**Boucher's Settlement:** This settlement on the South Saskatchewan River downstream from St. Laurent was named after Jean Baptiste Boucher. Boucher was the leader of a group of Metis families (Caron, Boyer, Trottier and Bremner) from St. Boniface who settled here in 1882. It later became St. Louis de Langevin.

**Chimney Coulee, Chapel Coulee, Eastend, Saskatchewan:** The eastern slopes of the Cypress Hills was a centuries old gathering place for plains Indians. In the early 1870's a small group of white traders and Metis' scouts led the Hudson Bay Trading Company to establish a post on the eastern slopes of the Cypress Hills. That first winter, Isaac Cowie, traded for 750 Plains Grizzly bear and 1500 elk hides. The Hudson Bay Co. only traded for one season because the competition from whiskey selling independent traders and the tense situation between Assiniboine and Blackfoot made it unsafe for Cowie to remain. In the spring, Cowie decided to abandon the post. After

---

<sup>1</sup> See Bill Barry, *People Places: Saskatchewan and its Names*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1997.

Cowie left the post it was burned to the ground. It then became known as Chimney Coulee since the chimneys of the early Metis settlement were all that remained.

In 1873, 60 Metis' families settled in the coulee, and had built a chapel in the village. The village then became known as Chapel Coulee. In 1879, the NWMP built a post on the same site as the Hudson Bay Trading Post and part of the Metis' village. This was the most easterly detachment from the newly built Fort Walsh. The small detachment at the east end post was to watch over the ever growing number of Sioux who had fled from the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

By 1887, the whiskey trading had been curtailed, the 1885 Metis Resistance at Batoche was over and Sitting Bull had returned to the United States. It was at this time that the post was moved closer to the present location of Eastend, along the, Frenchman River, now called the White Mud River.

**Coquille Pilée now Whitewood, Saskatchewan:** This community was originally called Coquille Pilée (Shell Pile) or La Cotchille Pilée by the Metis. In the early 1800s this was a favorite Metis wintering spot. In his memoires, Louis Goulet describes this spot as a hundred and twenty mile square plain covered with shrubs that the Metis called *bois de graine de chapelet*—bead-wood or rosary-wood. This is actually the Wolf Willow or Silverberry plant. Even today the seeds of its berries are used to make rosaries.

**Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan:** Crescent Lake is a former Metis Colony established by the Saskatchewan Department of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation in the late 1940s. The government moved a number of local Metis "Road Allowance" people to Crescent Lake, located just south of Yorkton. The government purchased this land from the land allotment of the Little Bone reserve based on the understanding that the Indian children would also attend the Crescent Lake School (which they did). Later, the government and the church conspired to move the Metis people off this land; some to the Lebret and other colonies, in the name of progress. Crescent Lake was the site of the first Metis School in Saskatchewan, Allery School. Interestingly it was not built and run by the Department of Education, but rather it was a project of the Department of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation.

**Cumberland House, Saskatchewan:** The Metis community of Cumberland House or "Waskahiganihk" as it is known in Cree, is located in the Northeastern Saskatchewan River delta. Originally founded in 1774, by Samuel Hearne of the Hudson's Bay Company, this was the first inland trading post established by the HBC. For many years Cumberland house served as a major distribution depot and transportation centre for the fur trade. After the Metis Resistances of 1870 and 1885, many Metis families migrated to Cumberland House from the Red River Settlement, St. Laurent, Manitoba and from wintering settlements on the South Saskatchewan River. Here they joined their Metis and Indian relations in making a living off the land by hunting, fishing and trapping and small scale agricultural pursuits. Unfortunately, the establishment of the ill-named Squaw Rapids Dam (since renamed the E.B. Campbell Dam) in 1906 for hydroelectric power in 1960, produced serious environmental damage and impaired the communities ability to support themselves. In 1976, Cumberland House sued the Saskatchewan

Power Corporation for damages. A settlement was reached in 1989, compensation was granted and the Cumberland House Development Corporation was established to administer the community development initiatives that this money funds.

**Cypress Hills (Mont-aux-Cypress) Saskatchewan and Alberta:** This hilly area at the southern corner on the boundary of Saskatchewan and Alberta was long used as a wintering area for Metis and first Nations people. Shelter from the elements and an abundance of game were the main attractions of this area. The hills rise some 600 meters above the surrounding prairie. Many Metis relocated here from Manitoba after 1870.

**Duck Lake, Saskatchewan:** After the Metis Resistance of 1869-70, many Metis from Manitoba relocated along the South Saskatchewan River at Duck Lake, St. Louis and Batoche. Duck Lake is on the Carlton Trail between Batoche and Fort Carlton. This trail was the site of the first battle of the 1885 Resistance. The North Saskatchewan River lies to the north west and the South Saskatchewan River is to the east. Beardy's and Okemasis' Reserves are just to the west of the community. Duck Lake itself is to the immediate southwest and is a stopping place for migratory birds, thus was a seasonal hunting location.

**Fish Creek, La Petite Ville: see Tourond's Coulee, Saskatchewan.** This village, 16 km. south of Batoche was founded by the Tourond family. It was the scene of Gabriel Dumont's first military encounter with Middleton's troops in 1885.

**Fort à la Corne, Saskatchewan:** Fort de la Corne was one of the two French forts established on the Saskatchewan River in 1753; the other was Fort La Jonquiere built in 1755. It was originally called Fort St. Louis, and later also called Fort des Prairies, Nippeween and Fort à la Corne. It was located downstream from the Saskatchewan River forks at the mouth of the Pehonan Creek a mile west of the later HBC post. This fort was built by the Fort Frontenac (Kingston, Ontario) - born French fur trader, Louis de la Corne (also known as Chevalier de la Corne) in 1753. This trading post at the Forks of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers was the first European post west of The Pas. It was also the first place in Saskatchewan that grain was grown: la Corne and his men seeded a few acres of land surrounding the post.

Fort a la Corne was built in 1753 by Louis de la Corne, the third of the four western commanders who followed La Vérendrye west. It was a fur trade post, the western end of the chain of posts that diverted furs away from the English on Hudson Bay and a base for exploration of the Saskatchewan which the French thought might lead to the Pacific. For most of its existence it was an outpost of Fort Paskoya (The Pas). It was closed in 1759 with the fall of New France. Currently it is the site of the James Smith First Nation Reserve.

After the amalgamation of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 the posts along the Swan River were closed. To replace them Governor Simpson erected a new headquarters and distribution centre for the Swan River district at Fort Pelly on a site selected by Chief Trader Allan McDonell. Fort Pelly was located at the southern end of the overland portage which led from the Assiniboine River to the Swan River. This was along the route used for transportation to York Factory on Hudson's Bay. Chief Factor John Clarke took charge of the post in 1826. Chief Factor Colin Robertson was in charge from 1830 to 1832; he was followed by Chief Trader William Todd from 1832 to 1842; then Chief Trader Cuthbert Cumming, Chief Trader William Todd, and then Chief Factor William J. Christie who moved the post in 1856-57 one quarter mile southeast to avoid flooding. Chief Trader Robert Campbell came to the post in 1863 and expanded its capacity as a horse and cattle breeding station. In June of 1912 Fort Pelly was closed.

**Fort Carlton:** Fort Carlton was located on the banks of the North Saskatchewan at the ford of Montée. Built in 1810 by Hudson's Bay Company employee James Bird, under Factor John Peter Pruden. It was the third Fort Carlton to be constructed in the Saskatchewan district and was located to oppose the nearby North West Company post La Montee. The first had been built in 1795 at the junction of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, and the second, 150 kilometers upstream on the South Saskatchewan. At its North Saskatchewan location, it served as a strategic crossroads for not only river travel, but also overland wagon trails that stretched from Fort Garry in the south, to Fort Edmonton in the west, and from Green Lake to the Churchill River. Supplies, not furs, were its main stock in trade; situated on the doorstep of the great buffalo plains of the west, the Fort served as a key distribution point for pemmican and "country produce" - locally available foods such as venison, fish and berries. Each year, if the buffalo hunt was good, hundreds of kilograms of pemmican fat and dried meat were collected by the Fort and shipped to far-flung trading posts. The operations of the rival Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company were even more intertwined than usual at the Fort Carlton: during its early years, the two companies shared the same Fort.



Fort Carlton 1871

At the time of the 1885 Resistance Fort Carlton was run by Charles N. Garson. It was subsequently destroyed by an accidental fire set by an HBC employee and never re-opened. Well-known fur traders who ran the fort were Patrick Small, Joseph Brazeau, Nicol Finlayson, Richard Hardisty Jr., Arthur Pruden and Lawrence Clarke.<sup>2</sup>

**Fort Pelly, Coude de l'homme, Saskatchewan:** Fort Pelly was the headquarters of the Swan Valley area. This fort took its name from Sir John Pelly, a governor of the company. Swan River House was close enough to large rivers and lakes that it could be easily accessed and could easily transport produce out also, this being it was a large loading depot for goods or "pieces" (furs, country produce). An 1864 brigade is reported getting stuck at Thunderhill Creek due to exhaustion of the oxen. Harmon complains even after all the building of forts and creating of gardens and such, that "we waste 9/10 of our time" as "leisure time."

This trading post was built in 1824 at the elbow of the Assiniboine River. The Fur Trade stimulated other industries as well. Harmon and Archibald N. McLeod, as early as 1800, spoke of salt and sugar being made and shipped to other forts. In "Resolution 33, from minutes of Temporary Council York Factory", dated July 1, 1824 regarding Fort Pelly states "That 3 boats containing 150 pieces and manned by 19 men constitute the current outfit; that Mr. McDonnell be directed to build 4 new boats of 27 ft. keel and than any of his indebted freeman by employed to furnish about 20 kegs of salt and as much sugar as they can supply." Peter Fidler, in 1820, reports that the natives were making sugar. It took three gallons of sap to make 3/4 lbs. of sugar.

**Fort Pitt:** Was established in 1829 when Chief Factor C.F. Rowand sent HBC clerk Patrick Small<sup>3</sup> from Edmonton House to establish a post near the Red Deer Hills on the North Saskatchewan. It was named Fort Pitt in honour of Thomas Pitt an HBC Governing Committee member from 1810 to 1832. The fort briefly closed in 1832 because of attacks then reopened in 1833 under the supervision of clerk Henry Fisher. Fort Pitt was a provisioning post for meat, pemmican, and grease as well as horses and dogs for the transportation system. In 1843, John Rowand<sup>4</sup> (1812-1865), the Metis son of Chief Factor John Rowand and Louise Umphreville of Fort Edmonton replaced Henry Fisher. In 1850 Rowand was promoted to the rank of Chief Trader. He was followed by William McKay who became Chief Factor in 1873, and Chief Trader W.J. McLean in 1884. Fort Pitt's importance as a transportation hub increased after 1860, when the Carlton Trail, the overland route between Fort Garry and Fort Edmonton, became the Company's main route to the interior. On September 9, 1876, Fort Pitt was a location for the signing of Treaty No. 6 between the Crown and several Bands of Plains and Wood Cree. Fort Pitt figured in the 1885 Resistance when on April 2, 1885,

---

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Light, 1987: 148.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Small Jr (1789-1846), a Metis, was employed by NWC (1804-1821) and HBC (1821-1846), he was the son of (I)-Patrick Small Sr. and Cree Woman. Patrick Jr. was stationed in Edmonton area from 1804 to 1826). Small married in 1813 at Fort Augustus (Edmonton), Nancy Hughes Metisse, "in the custom of the country" and had the marriage ratified August 21, 1838 at Carlton House, at the junction of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. Nancy was the daughter of James Hughes, Chief factor of Fort Augustus (Edmonton) and Indian woman.

<sup>4</sup> John Rowand Jr married Margarete Harriot, Margarete's parents were Edward (Ted) Harriot and Margaret Pruden.

some of Big Bear's Mistahi-Maskwa Cree, attacked the Fort. In 1890 William McKay Jr. closed Fort Pitt and all of its buildings were moved to Onion Lake.

Fort Pitt was built by Patrick Small in 1829-30. They traded in pemmican, buffalo hides and other provisions. During the 1880's Fort Pitt was a major fur trade and supply post for the Hudson Bay Company. The fur traders in charge of this fort include Henry Fisher, John Rowand Jr. James Simpson, Richard Hardisty Jr., William McKay Sr., Angus McKay and William McKay Jr. The fort was the site for the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876 and it served as a militia center during the North West Resistance in 1885. In the early 1800's many of the original HBC trading posts along the North Saskatchewan River were abandoned during the competition between the HBC and the North West Company. A second generation of trading posts such as Fort Edmonton and Fort Carlton replaced them, with Fort Pitt half way between the two. Fort Pitt was built in 1829. From 1829 to 1876 the trading post served as a supply fort, providing meat and pemmican as well as collecting fur. The fort was seriously affected by the disappearance of the buffalo and began to decline. In 1876 Fort Pitt was chosen to co-host signing of Treaty 6, the other half of the process being at Fort Carlton to the east. The fort was partially destroyed during the 1885 Metis Resistance and the buildings were moved to Onion Lake in 1890 by William McKay.

**Fort Qu'Appelle:** This town is located in the Qu'Appelle valley northeast of Regina and just east of Pasqua Lake. The current site is Saskatchewan's third Fort Qu'Appelle. The first was an XY Company post 1801-05 on the river near the Manitoba border. The Hudson's Bay Company first used the name for a post north of Whitewood 1813-19. The current site was an Hudson's Bay Company post 1852-54 and 1864-1911."

Fort Qu'Appelle in southern Saskatchewan is located in the Qu'Appelle River Valley 70 km NE of Regina between Echo and Mission Lakes" and not to be confused with the once-significant nearby town of Qu'Appelle located to the north. The name "Qu'Appelle" comes from the French name for "Who calls" and is derived from its Cree name, Kah-tep-was, "the river that calls." It was originally established in 1852 as a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. The current site is the third Fort Qu'Appelle. The first was a North West Company trading post (1801-05), also in the valley to the east, near what is now the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. The Hudson's Bay Company itself first used the name for a post north of present-day Whitewood (some 174 kilometres east of Regina on Number 1 Highway) from 1813 to 1819.

Prior to the mid-19th century establishment of the longer surviving fur-trading post at the ultimate site of the town, it was the hub of several historic trails that traversed the northwest. It was the site of a Hudson's Bay Company post from 1852 to 1854. The post was revived again from 1864 to 1911. It is the site for the signing of Treaty 4 by Cree, Nakota and Salteaux peoples.

**Gabriel's Crossing:** In 1871, Gabriel Dumont settled on a farm on the east bank of the South Saskatchewan River at another Carlton Trail river crossing about six miles upstream from Batoche. This site is about half a mile south of the present day Gabriel's

Bridge. Over the years he built a small store/tavern/pool hall and developed a farm of about twenty planted acres. He also raised horses that he used as leader of the buffalo hunts. In 1872, Dumont replaced the Hudson's Bay scow moored at this crossing with a regular ferry and entered into competition with the Batoche ferry. He posted an advertising sign on the Carlton Trail where it divides near the present day community of Humboldt. The sign listed his rates and was written in English, French and Cree. Dumont's ferry was 22 feet long by twelve feet wide, held by rope and moved by oars. In 1877, the Northwest Territories began to regulate ferry services and Gabriel had to apply for a license to operate.

**Green Lake, Lac Vert, Saskatchewan:** Green Lake was the site of Green Lake House (NWC) on the north side and Essex House (HBC) on the west of the lake: North West Company trader Angus Shaw documents a wintering post at Green Lake dating back to 1782. The Green Lake Metis settlement is located 55 kilometers northeast of Meadow Lake. In 1793 the NWC established a permanent post, and in 1810 the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established itself on the lake. In 1816-1817, the NWC seized the HBC post and its men, however a HBC post was re-established by 1818, and in 1821 the two companies merged. Shortly after the merger, the Green Lake post was closed for several years, reopening in 1831, and continuing operation until 1973.

Green Lake is located between Fort Carlton and the Methye Portage which accesses the Athabasca river system. The Beaver River provided an east-west waterway half-way between the Athabasca River to the north and the Saskatchewan River to the south. The post was used to store goods that were hauled in carts overland from Fort Carlton. The trade goods were then freighted by canoe to Isle a-la-Crosse and the northern districts of English River, Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace and Athabasca Rivers. Green Lake was founded by the Metis in 1782 and was established as a Hudson's Bay Company Post in 1860. The Metis in the vicinity worked as labourers, cart men and hunters and fishers for this post.

By 1940 it became apparent that agriculture had to replace the traditional hunting economy. To assist the people of Green Lake with employment and training, the provincial government set up Central Farm, a program of 99-year leases on 40-acre (160,000 m<sup>2</sup>) plots. In addition, a new road is built to Meadow Lake and Ile à la Crosse. Thus, in 1940 the provincial government set aside Townships 57 to 62 in Ranges 12 and 13 West of the third Meridian as an agricultural project for the Metis. The goal of this "Green Lake Experiment" was to reduce the government expenditures for social assistance. This land was leased to the Metis under 99 year leases. Unfortunately, these forty-two acre parcels were too small to sustain commercial farming. Tony Larocque was the first settlement manager. In 1944, the government moved large numbers of Metis who were receiving social assistance in the south to Green Lake, most notably from around Lestock in central Saskatchewan. To offset the continued poverty of the Metis at Green Lake the government then set up a government run farm known as the Central Farm. It was to teach farming as well as some industrial skills. In effect though, this government colony at Green Lake was used to train semi-skilled labour to the lumber and fishing industries that were growing in size in northern Saskatchewan.

**Grosse Butte:** Grosse Butte is a Metis wintering site along the Carlton trail established in the 1860s. It is located near the present day Humboldt, Saskatchewan.

**Halcro, Saskatchewan:** Halcro is north of St. Louis, Saskatchewan and south of Prince Albert in Saskatchewan. On the north side of the South Saskatchewan River, it was initially settled by Anglo-Metis from Manitoba in the 1870s. The Halcro Settlement was founded by Henry and William Halcrow, sons of Thomas Halcrow and Charlotte Knight. Many relatives moved from Manitoba to the Halcro Settlement, Red Deer Hill and Birch Hills in the South Saskatchewan River Valley. Riel held Metis Resistance meetings at Halcro in 1884. Louis Riel hid in Margaret Halcro's root cellar after the battle of Batoche. The Halcro's lived on River Lot #7 just north of Lépine's ferry.

**Ile à la Crosse (Sakitawak), Saskatchewan:** Located in northern Saskatchewan the town of Ile à la Crosse is one of Western Canada's oldest Metis communities. It was originally established by Thomas Frobisher and Louis Primeau as a trading post for the Montreal based fur trade in 1776. In 1846 the mission of Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l'Isle-a-la-Crosse was built by Father Alexandre Tache. Louis Riel's sister, the Reverend Sister Marguerite-Marie (Sarah) worked and died there at age 34 (December 27, 1883). Located on a peninsula of the lake of the same name, this community was in a strategic location because it was on the Churchill River system, which led into Hudson Bay.

**La Montée, Saskatchewan:** This was the site of a buffalo crossing and an old Indian trail between the branches of the Saskatchewan River. In 1811, the North West Company post here, on the North Branch of the Saskatchewan River, west of Duck Lake and forty miles upstream from Prince Albert, located somewhere between Batoche and St. Laurent. There was a portage trail east to the South Branch of the Saskatchewan River at South Branch House and Gardepuys Crossing. Another trail led from this location northwards to Green Lake and Isle a la Crosse. The brigades would travel on horseback thus the name "La Montée" from the French verb "monter." Fort La Montée was later built three miles upriver from Fort Carlton in 1811. The fort was a provisioning post for pemmican as well as vegetable and feed crops. It also maintained a horse ranch. It was populated by 70 Metis employees and sixty women and children. After the amalgamation of the HBC and NWC the post was abandoned and transferred to Fort Carlton, however the gardens and feed crops were maintained due to the better soil.

**Lac aux Canards (Duck Lake), Saskatchewan:** This Metis community is located on the Carlton Trail 23 km. west of Batoche, it marked the halfway point between the Métis headquarters at Batoche and the HBC and NWMP at Fort Carlton. Beardy's Reserve was established on the west side of the lake. The 1885 Metis Resistance began at Duck Lake when the Metis went there to confiscate the weapons and supplies from the local stores. The first fighting between the Metis militia and Superintendent Crozier's men took place on the Carlton Trail northwest of Duck Lake.

**Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan:** The Cree and Metis already inhabited this location in north-central Saskatchewan when Peter Pond built a fur trade post there in 1781.

**Lac Pelletier and Vallée Ste. Claire, Saskatchewan:** Located southwest of Moose Jaw, this was a long time wintering spot for Metis hunters. It became a permanent community with the large exodus of Metis moving from Manitoba in 1870.

**Lebret (St. Florent Mission) and Val Qu'Appelle:** The village of Lebret is east of Fort Qu'Appelle in the Qu'Appelle Valley. It was settled in 1866 and was a long time Metis community when the Oblates sent out priests to serve the community. It is named after Father Louis Lebret, who in 1886 was briefly the first postmaster. After Fr. Hugonard became the principal of the Indian Residential School in 1884, Fr. Lebret succeeded him as parish priest. He applied to change the name of the church from St. Florent to Sacré Coeur de Jésus (it is Sacred Heart of Jesus today) and have the postal station go by the same name but this was rejected. Apparently a Senator Girard, who knew Fr. Lebret, intervened and arranged to have the post office called Lebret. The locale had been known as St. Florent (named by Bishop Taché after his friend Fr. Florent Vandenburg OMI) from 1865, or the Mission from 1872, when the Oblate Fathers had established a mission here. After the Resistance of 1869-1870, the twenty or so Metis families at St. Florent were joined by thirty more families from the St. Francois Xavier area (Father St. Germain letter to Bishop Taché, December 26, 1879). By then the Metis settlement stretched as far east as the vicinity of Fort Ellice.

**Last Mountain Lake:** Last Mountain Lake, also called Long Lake, is located 48 km northwest of Regina, Saskatchewan. It was a well-known wintering site for Metis bison hunters. Its name commemorates a Cree legend describing how the Great Spirit made the last hills (east of Duval) from soil scooped from the valley now occupied by the lake. Scientists say it formed c. 11,000 years ago from meltwaters of the continental ice sheet draining south into the Qu'Appelle glacial spillway. In 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company built Last Mountain House at the southern end of the lake; Isaac Cowie, clerk for the HBC, described one of the last great herds of buffalo in the region. In his book "The Company of Adventurers." (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913). Last Mountain House lasted only a few years before it was destroyed by fire. However this led to the establishment of a pair of hunting camps on the lake's south shore. One was Metis and the other First Nations. More settlers arrived by 1885 and in 1886 the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway and Steamboat Co. built a branch line as far as Craven, intending to run a steam ship service along the lake, but the rail link to Saskatoon was completed in 1890, bypassing the lake. Canada's first federal bird sanctuary was designated on the lake in 1887. Cowie, writing in 1867-1874, describes the winter activities of the Metis at this site:

#### METIS FESTIVITIES.

The winter quarters of the two Metis Counsellors of Assiniboine had been taken up on the west side of Last Mountain Lake, about fifteen miles north-west from ours. I drove with my dog-sled twice to visit them. On one occasion to relieve Madame Amlin of a tormenting tooth, and on some business as well as for pleasure the other time. As befitted persons of their importance, as well as to accommodate their large retinue of relatives and followers and for trading purposes,

## RED RIVER JIG AND SCOTCH REEL

their winter camp was large, their single-roomed dwellings being especially spacious.

My former travelling companion, Henri Hibert dit Fabian, accompanied me once when we spent the night under Mr. Breland's hospitable roof. Besides his accomplishments as a voyageur, Henri was a vocalist who knew all the chansons of the canoe men, but the song into which he put most fire and fervour was that of Pierre Falcon, "Le bon garçon," made and composed to celebrate the massacre of the wounded at Seven Oaks in 1816, and "La glorie de tous ces Bois-brûlés," obtained thereby.

After a feast of the best of buffalo meat, as well as cakes, rice and raisins beautifully cooked by Madame Breland, followed by a flowing bowl of rum punch, Mr. Amlin and his following came to join in further festivities. Fiddles were tuned up, and Red River jig and Scotch reel were joyously joined in by the young men and maidens, who were soon followed by their elders. The mirthful dance was later on, as the ladies retired, followed by joyous song and thrilling story of celebrated adventures on the voyage, in the chase, and in the encounters of the Metis with the Sioux. Each admirer extolled the excellencies of his favourite racing and hunting horse, and the speed and endurance of sled-dogs and their drivers. On the relative merits of all these there at once arose loud and lively argument, to allay which a song was opportunely called for. To wet the whistle, every now and again Mr. Breland, whose twinkling eye and amused smile showed the fun he was having quietly out of the excitement of his guests, would judiciously dispense a little liquid refreshment. As the assembly warmed up, the end of each dance, song or story was immediately followed at first by one or other of the more enthusiastic Metis Nationalists calling out, "Vive mon nation." Gradually more and more joined in the cry, till before the festivities ceased, everyone joined in the shout of triumph, with the exception of Mr. Breland himself, whose genial countenance became grave as he thought of the events

**Marieval:** The Metis village of Marieval is east of Fort Qu'Appelle and Lebret and west of the Sakimay Reserve in the Qu'Appelle Valley. This town is part of a string of Metis communities located in the valley. The valley was a hunting and trading area for the Metis dating back to the days of Cuthbert Grant, the "Warden of the Plains."

**Meadow Lake (Bolsover House), Saskatchewan:** Meadow Lake is located 160 km North of North Battleford. In 1799, Peter Fidler, the Hudson's Bay Company's surveyor and his group travelled along the Beaver River which extends from Ile-a-la-Crosse south to Green Lake then west all the way into Alberta. The group turned off the Beaver into the Meadow River, travelling south to its source which was called "Lac des Prairies," the original name for Meadow Lake. Here, his group led by carpenter Hugh Sabiston built a 12 foot by 12 foot log building as a company post and called it Bolsover House, after Fidler's birthplace in England. Peter Fidler continued with three other men, to Red Deer Lake in Alberta, leaving seven men at the Meadow Lake post. The post remained open for one season only and in 1801 it was closed and the inventory was transferred to the nearby Green Lake Post.

In 1881, a sixteen-section area to the immediate north of Meadow Lake was surveyed as a future Indian Reserve. In 1888, an area just to the west was surveyed for the future town site. In 1889, a group of Cree Indians in the area signed into Treaty #6, and assumed title to the Reserve, originally known as the Meadow Lake Indian Band and now known as the Flying Dust First Nation.

Cyprien Morin (1836-1924) from La Loche established a Hudson's Bay Company Post at Meadow Lake, traded in furs, and raised horses and cattle. The first Roman Catholic Church was built on the Morin's land. Although the Métis families who settled at Meadow Lake prospered, it was not until 1907-08 that subsequent settlers began to slowly arrive in the area.

That same year (1889), several Metis families arrived to settle on the west end of Meadow Lake. But Cyprien Morin had been the first settler to arrive. Cyprien was born in the English River District circa 1834-36. He remained in this area and worked for the Hudson's Bay Company primarily in Ile-a-la-Crosse where he had married Marie Cook (1844-1926) from La Ronge.

Cyprien and Marie Morin moved their family to Meadow Lake in 1873, setting up home where the Meadow Lake Golf Course is now located. He opened a Hudson's Bay Company post, traded in fur, and raised cattle and horses. The first Roman Catholic church in Meadow Lake was built on his land. Cyprien Morin died in 1924 at the age of ninety five.

**Minichinas Hills, Saskatchewan:** If one follows McKay Creek upstream from where it joins the South Saskatchewan River at present day St. Louis one comes to a landmark, known to many early explorers as "Lumpy Hill of the Woods" or the Minichinas Hills. These hills have an altitude more than 300 feet higher than the surrounding land. The Minichinas Hills run north to south from southeast of Bellevue to

the east of the One Arrow Reserve. They are located near the Venne ranch. After the fighting at Batoche in 1885 the Metis women and children sheltered at Minichinas Hills.

**Mont du Tondre (Touchwood Hills):** This area was a wintering spot for bison and was settled by the Metis hunters in 1866.

**Montagne de Bois Coulée Chapelle and Talle de Saules (Willow Bunch) or Wood Mountain:** As the Metis from Manitoba had to move further and further west in search of bison, they established wintering camps in places such as Wood Mountain. After the 1869-70 Resistance even more people moved to these locations.

Wood Mountain (elevation 1000 metres), is located about 135 km southwest of present day Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, near the Canada-U.S. border on the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel. It has flat-topped hills, dissected by coulees, which rise some 400 metres above the surrounding prairie. The Métis settled on the slopes of Montagne de Bois in 1870, building houses from the plentiful poplar trees. In 1871 the HBC trading post at Wood Mountain became the prairie depot of the Boundary Commission. The Fort Qu'Appelle – Wood Mountain Trail was a provisional supply route during the height of the fur trade. It was approximately 250 km in length across vast expanses of southern prairie. From east to west it followed a general southwest direction from Fort Qu'Appelle, going south of Regina, through the Dirt Hills ending in Wood Mountain. The trail was an important provisional route supplying Hudson's Bay Company posts southwest of Fort Qu'Appelle. Lebreton missionaries also used the trail extensively, as it was their only access to numerous Métis settlements.

En 1869, un Métis nommé George Fisher avait visité certaines familles métisses qui hivernaient dans la région de la Montagne de Bois. Selon Fisher, cette région était enchantée; le territoire en question étant traversé par une vallée où abondaient le bois et les sources d'eau et où il y avait beaucoup de bisons et de gibier. Une caravane de 300 charrettes avait donc quitté Pembina. Elle transportait 75 familles métisses venant de Pembina, de Saint-Joseph et de Saint-François-Xavier. Tous se dirigeaient vers la Montagne de Bois. Jean-Louis Légaré, traiteur et futur fondateur de Willow Bunch était avec ce groupe de Métis.

In 1869, a Metis named George Fisher<sup>5</sup> had visited certain Metis families who wintered in the area of the Wood Mountain. According to Fisher, this area was inviting; the territory in question was crossed by a valley where wood and sources of water abounded; and where there were many bison and other game. A caravan of 300 carts had thus left Pembina. They transported 75 Metis families coming from Pembina, Saint-Joseph and

---

<sup>5</sup> George Fisher (1830-1898) was born in Prairie du Chein, Wisconsin in 1830, the son of George Fisher and Genevieve Courville. George married Emilie Boyer, the daughter of Baptiste Boyer (b. 1805) and Helene McMillan (b.1811) and had 11 children. He passed away on 1898 in Lebreton, George was a nephew of Hudson's Bay Company Chief Trader Henry Fisher.

Saint-François-Xavier. All moved towards the Wood Mountain. Jean-Louis Légaré, a trader and future founder Willow Bunch was with this group of Metis.<sup>6</sup>

Les nouveaux venus s'établissent premièrement à un endroit appelé la Coulée-Chapelle. Dans son histoire de Willow Bunch, l'abbé Clovis Rondeau explique que la Coulée-Chapelle se trouvait dans la paroisse de Saint-Victor, à quelques milles de Willow Bunch. Dans son article dans le Patriote de l'Ouest, Louis Schmidt, ancien secrétaire de Louis Riel, donne un autre nom à la Coulée-Chapelle. «Ainsi, si je ne me trompe, St-Victor se trouve tout près de la “Coulée des Prêtres”, c'est-à-dire l'endroit où le premier missionnaire de ces régions - la Montagne de Bois - s'est d'abord établi et a passé l'hiver; je crois que c'était le Père Lestanc, qui a été remplacé peu après par le P. St-Germain.»

The newcomers establish firstly at a place called the Coulée-Chapelle. In the history of Willow Bunch, Abbot Clovis Rondeau explains that the Coulée-Chapelle was in the parish of Saint-Victor, some miles west of Willow Bunch. Louis Schmidt, former secretary of Louis Riel, give another name to the Coulée-Chapelle. “Thus, if I am not mistaken, St-Victor is very close to the “Coulée des Prêtres”, said to be the place where the first missionary of this area - the Wood Mountain - established and overwintered; I believe that this was Father Lestanc, who was replaced shortly after by the Pere St. Germain.”

In 1870 the Metis came to Willow Bunch to settle with their families. At that time the little Saskatchewan town was called "*Talle-de-Saules*" in honour of the bark from the abundant willow trees in the area used for smoking.

In 1870, Antoine Ouellette sent Louis Legare to trade with the people in the area between Wood Mountain and Willow Bunch, a distance of approximately 40 miles known as *La Montagne de Bois*. Jean Louis Legare was hired by his Metis employer, Antoine Ouellette<sup>7</sup>, at a salary of \$25.00 a month to establish a business in this area. He organized a camp at Little Woody which is approximately 15 miles south of Willow Bunch and spent the winter of 1870-1871 collecting furs. In the spring he travelled to Pembina to sell the furs he had collected over the winter months. He continued on to St Francois-Xavier, Manitoba, where he became a partner with George Fisher, who had previously been interested in establishing a post in the Willow Bunch Area. Fisher provided the merchandise, the horses and carts, two men, and promised Legare one third of the profits.

---

<sup>6</sup> On April 15, 1873, Jean-Louis married Marie Ouellette, the daughter of François Ouellette (born August 7, 1832 at SFX) and Joseph Bottineau (born 1833 at SFX). On October 5, 1875, Marie gave birth to their only child Albert Joseph. Tragedy struck this new family on December 4, 1876, when Marie Ouellette passed away after falling off a horse while she was visiting her father at Fort Walsh. Seven Ouellettes led by Old Joseph Ouellette signed the Cypress Hills Metis Hunting Band petition for a reserve along the border in 1878. Four of the Ouelettes later signed Louis Riel's petition of August 6, 1880 to Nelson A. Miles, (Musselshell River MT), asking for a Métis reservation in central Montana. These men were all sons of Old Joseph Ouellette (b. 1872) and Theresa Houle (b. 1794): Antoine Ouellette (b. 1835), François Ouellette (b. 1832), Joseph Ouellette (b. 1834) and Moise Ouellette (b. 1830).

<sup>7</sup> Antoine “Ratte” Ouellette was an independent trader operating back and forth to St. Paul. He was heavily involved in the Metis/Dakota/Lakota trade. He was a scout and guide for the North West Mounted Police and when Sitting Bull came north in 1876 he was reliant on Ouellette and Legare for supplies.

Legare and his party arrived to establish a trading post in the area 3 miles east of the Police Post at Wood Mountain. He remained there for 9 years.

During the fall of 1879, a vast prairie fire destroyed all of the grazing area in a considerable portion of *La Montagne de Bois*, resulting in many of the Metis moving east and setting up camp in the St. Victor and Willow Bunch areas. In 1880 Legare constructed a temporary building (a store and adjoining house), the first wooden house in Willow Bunch. A private water line existed to the Legare Home. Legare's efforts resulted in many French Canadian settlers coming to this area.

In 1884, Legare drove one hundred horses to Manitoba and received forty five head of domesticated cattle in return. This began the establishment of ranches in the Willow Bunch area and served as a viable means of livelihood for some of the Metis there.

Nevertheless, many Metis remained in half starving condition owing to the collapse of the trade in buffalo skins. Many Metis moved northward and set up camps in the Moose Jaw area. When the Resistance of 1885 was building momentum citizens of Moose Jaw became perturbed. In response Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney came to Moose Jaw and telegraphed Jean Louis Legare to come from Willow Bunch to induce these Metis to return south. Legare told the Metis that he wanted them to take something back to Willow Bunch and that it was top secret. Of course, they were not happy when they reached Willow Bunch and found out that they had been brought here under false pretences.

Legare was able to settle them down by hiring forty men, which represented all Metis families in the area, at \$2.00 a day as scouts. Legare scattered these families around at such a distance apart as to render them harmless.

**Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan:** Moose Jaw is located on the Moose Jaw River at the juncture with Thunder Creek situated 77 km (48 mi) west of present day Regina. Moose Jaw is adjacent to the old Fort McLeod/Fort Walsh Trail that led eastward through Whoop-Up to Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, which was established in 1874 and became headquarters of the North West Mounted Police in 1878. The trail continued eastward to Fort Qu'Appelle, passing just east of Moose Jaw and north of Regina. It was a regular trade route and an overland thoroughfare connecting the outposts of the fur trade activities. Moose Jaw was originally settled as a traditional Indian fur traders camp at "the turn", a narrow crossing of the river, plenty of water and game for food, made this an ideal place for settlement. It was a winter encampment for both Cree and Assiniboine nations, and there are burial grounds in the vicinity. The natural protection of the Coteau Range provided the valley with many warm breezes. The name Moose Jaw comes from a Cree name for the place, *moscâstani-sîpiy*, meaning "a warm place by the river". The first two syllables, *moscâ-*, sound remarkably like "moose jaw". During the fur trade era, Métis buffalo hunters had wintering cabins in the River Valley at "the turn" where the fur trail from Fort Garry forged Moose Jaw Creek.

**Muskeg Lake, Saskatchewan:** One of the founders of the Muskeg Lake community and the first chief of the Reserve was Alexandre Cayen *dit* Boudreau (b. 1834).

Alexandre, also known as *Kee-too-way-how* (Sounding with Flying Wings) was born at St. Boniface, Manitoba, the son of Narcisse Cayen *dit* Boudreau and Catherine Arcand (Kesewetin). On September 22, 1855 he married Marie McGillis at St. François Xavier. Marie was the daughter of Alexandre McGillis and Marguerite Bottineau. They had ten children. In 1876 he was a signatory to Treaty Six and took up a reserve at Muskeg Lake (Petequaakey). His name appears on the first treaty pay list of 1879 and again in 1880 when he received his payments as chief. He subsequently left and took Metis scrip. His brother Isidore (noted below) then succeeded him as chief of this Metis band.<sup>8</sup> At the time of the Resistance he, his brother, and his son (Alexandre Jr.) were active in the fighting. His son was also a member of the Petequaakey Band. Another Metis resistance fighter, Augustin Laframboise, was also married to a woman from the same reserve. During the hostilities the Council sent Alexandre back to Muskeg Lake to bring more of his men. Cayen was a member of Captain James Short's company, one of the 19 *dizaines* led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Metis Resistance. Alexandre played a key role in the 1885 Resistance. He was Gabriel Dumont's envoy to the Assiniboine Indians when the Metis were requesting their support. He was sentenced to a seven-year prison term for his participation in the 1885 Metis Resistance.

Isidore Cayen *dit* Boudreau, or Petequaakey (1845-1889) was the brother of Alexandre Cayen and was a Councilor when his brother was Chief. After Alexandre left the reserve to live near Batoche, Petequaakey became Chief and for a number of years (1880-1889) and the Reserve at Muskeg Lake took his name. Petequaakey was married to Marie Cardinal who died on April 6, 1884. He subsequently married Marie (Tskakwemesit). He was active with Gabriel Dumont during the fighting at Duck Lake. He did not view this as fighting the government since their opponents were the police. After 1885, Indian Affairs removed Petequaakey as chief and stopped payments to the band because of their participation in the Resistance.<sup>9</sup>

The next chief at Muskeg Lake was Jean Baptiste LaFond or "Tchehasaso." (1853-1916) Jean Baptiste was born January 25, 1853 at St. Boniface, the son of Jean Baptiste Lafond Sr. and Therese Arcand. His mother's half sister, Adelaide was married to Alexandre Cayen (Kitowehow), the first Chief of Muskeg Lake and a participant in the 1885 Resistance. On December 4, 1876 at St. Laurent N.W.T., Tchehasaso married Josette Meutekumah (Archibuk). He succeeded his uncles (Kitowehow and Petequaakey) as chief at Muskeg Lake from 1900 to 1914. It is understood that Tchehasaso and the other Muskeg Lake Metis participated in the fighting at Duck Lake and were on the west side of the river during the fighting at Batoche. After the defeat they escaped to the Laboucane Settlement.<sup>10</sup>

LaFond's grandson, John B. LaFond gives the following account of the formation of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Reserve:

When they formed the reserve that year, 1876 ...they were going to make the reserve, there were only nine families that they had. And my grandpa's family (J.B. "Tchehasaso" La Fond and his wife Josette), that's my dad (Jean Baptiste born May 20, 1878, later married to Julie Gladu), and them, old Andrew (Andre born August 2,

<sup>8</sup> Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, "Chiefs of the Petequaakey Reserve," muskeglake.com, 1991, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, "Chiefs of the Petequaakey Reserve," muskeglake.com, 1991, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, "Chiefs of the Petequaakey Reserve," muskeglake.com, 1991, 1994.

1880, later married to Madeleine Greyeyes) and Jeremy (Joseph Jeremie LaFond later married to Nancy Letendré) ... anyway, they had no place, they were Metis people. At that time they lived on the road allowance, you know. And they asked him if they wanted to be treaty Indian: "Mr. LaFond, do you want to be a treaty Indian? We need one family." "By all means," he says. So he signed, that's how come we're treaty, see we have French ancestry.<sup>11</sup>

**Muskootao Point:** This is the site of the first Batoche Trading Post; established by Jean Baptiste Letendre dit Batoche (called Okimawskawikinam by the Cree). It is located on the Saskatchewan River just west of Fort à la Corne on the north bank. The Metis voyageurs had arrived in the area in the mid-1750s. Jean Baptiste came to the north-west in the 1780s and married Josephite, a Cree woman at Rocky Mountain House. They traded throughout the plains and had built the Batoche post by 1810. In 1872, his grandson Xavier Letendre dit Batoche set up his trading post on the South Saskatchewan River and this second location took on the name of Batoche.

**Pointe du Chien-Maigre (Fort Carlton):** This was one of the North Saskatchewan's most important "Forts des Prairies," or provisioning posts, Fort Carlton was located on the banks of the North Saskatchewan at the ford of La Montée. It was built in 1810 by Hudson's Bay Company employee James Bird and was the third Fort Carlton to be constructed in the Saskatchewan district. The first had been built in 1795 at the junction of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, and the second, 150 kilometres upstream on the South Saskatchewan. At its North Saskatchewan location, it served as a strategic crossroads for not only river travel, but also overland wagon trails that stretched from Fort Garry in the south, to Fort Edmonton in the west, and from Green Lake to the Churchill River. Supplies, not furs, were its main stock in trade; situated close to the great buffalo plains of the west, the Fort served as a key distribution point for pemmican and "country produce" - locally available foods such as venison, fish and berries. Each year, after the buffalo hunt, hundreds of pounds of pemmican fat and dried meat were collected by the Fort and shipped to far-flung trading posts. The operations of the rival Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company were even more intertwined than usual at the Fort Carlton: during its early years, the two companies shared the Fort's stockade.

**Prairie Ronde, Saskatchewan:** The Round Prairie Métis were originally a community of buffalo hunters with strong connections to the Metis of Montana and Batoche. This community started in the 1800s as a Metis wintering site. It is located south of Saskatoon near present day Dundurn, Saskatchewan, south of the Dakota Whitecap First Nation. In the 1850s it was a well-known wintering camp for buffalo hunters such as Andre Trottier and had become a year-round Metis settlement by the early 1880s. By the early 1900s, Round Prairie became the permanent home of this group of Métis as they settled and took out homesteads. The community began migrating into Saskatoon in the late 1920s and 30s looking for work and, by the end of the 30's, they were settling permanently in Saskatoon in the Holiday Park area and on the east side between Taylor,

---

<sup>11</sup> Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, "History of the Petequakey Reserve," muskeglake.com, 1991, 1994. . Jean Baptiste, Andre and Jeremie were all born at St. Laurent on the South Saskatchewan.

Broadway and Clarence. According to some family members, the site of Aden Bowman Collegiate was a large communal garden in the late 40s and 50s. Charles Trottier was the leader of this settlement in its early and noted that he began living there in 1855 when traveling with his parents to hunt buffalo on the plains. Charles was a trader in the North West Territories, having hunted with Norbert Welsh for many years. He was the son of André Trottier and Marguerite Pacquette. His first marriage was to Marie-Anne Parenteau, his second to Ursula Laframboise. In 1878, Charles and other Metis buffalo hunters at Cypress Hills wrote a petition asking for a special Metis reserve of land.

Trottier was a close friend and relative of Gabriel Dumont and brought his men along with the Dakota Indians of Whitecap's Band to fight at Batoche in April of 1885. He and Whitecap were members of Riel's Exovodate (Provisional Government). It is said that Whitecap and twenty of his men had joined the Resistance under duress. Trottier, along with Gabriel and Edouard Dumont, Jean Caron, Michel Dumas, Isidore Dumas and Chief Fine Day, escaped to the United States after the final battle at Batoche. Charles returned to Prairie-Ronde applied for land after his return in 1903.

**Prince Albert, Saskatchewan:** James Isbister (1833-1915) founded Prince Albert, Saskatchewan in 1862. Isbister, a fur trader and farmer, was born on November 29, 1833 at Oxford House the son of John Isbister; an Orkneyman employed with HBC and Francis Sinclair an English Metis. James was a leader of what were then known as the "English Half-Breeds." He obtained his education at the Red River Settlement and was a noted linguist, fluent in English, Gaelic, Cree, Chipewyan and Michif languages. He entered Hudson's Bay Company service in 1853 and spent his entire working life in the Cumberland and Saskatchewan districts, mostly around Cumberland House and Nepowewin, where he married Margaret Bear (also Metis) in 1859. They had 16 children. He rose in the Company from labourer to interpreter, to postmaster and finally clerk. He retired briefly in 1862-64, 1867-68 and finally left the HBC in 1871. Isbister and his wife established a farm on the Lower North Saskatchewan River, June 3, 1862 and were the first settlers in this area, originally known as the Isbister Settlement. This home was built about halfway between Carlton and Fort la Corne. Relatives from both of their families then joined them, namely, James' brother Adam Isbister and Margaret's father William Bear and her brothers Philip and James Bear. A number of other Metis settlers moved to the "Isbister Settlement" before 1870. These were: Joseph Badger, James Dreaver, Henry Erasmus and John H. Pruden. Later, a Presbyterian minister James Nisbet established a church nearby and renamed the place Prince Albert. History has subsequently ignored the fact that it was Isbister who settled the area. In the early 1890s the Dakota people moved to the area. This band was led by Hupa Yakta, the son of Chief White Cap whose band was located south of Saskatoon near Trottier's settlement at Prairie Ronde.

**Red Deer Hill:** Red Deer Hill is south of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and north of St. Louis, Saskatchewan. It was settled by Metis from Manitoba in the 1860s and 1870s. The area takes its name from a large hill which in the early days was populated by many elk or "red deer".

Soon after its founding some 250 Metis families moved into the area around St. Laurent. Initially these settlers practiced subsistence agriculture, participated in the buffalo hunt and worked for the Hudson's Bay Company as cart men and labourers. By 1873, the community was experiencing real problems due to the demise of the buffalo herds and the implementation of HBC policies to reduce wages and increase the prices of manufactured goods. In effect the company was exploiting a captive market and captive labour force. The company's Chief Factors were made magistrates; the company quickly outlawed labour strikes and threatened to imprison anyone who led a strike against the company. Further the company undermined the communities Laws of the Prairie and Hunting; this led to a full-scale slaughter of buffalo on the plains

**Regina, Saskatchewan:** Regina is adjacent to the old Fort McLeod/Fort Walsh Trail that led eastward through Whoop-Up to Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, which was established in 1874 and became headquarters of the North West Mounted Police in 1878. The trail continued eastward to Fort Qu'Appelle, passing just east of Moose Jaw and north of Regina. It was a regular trade route and an overland thoroughfare connecting the outposts of the fur trade activities. Regina was established in 1882 when it became clear that Edgar Dewdney, the lieutenant-governor of the NWT, rejected the previously established and considered, Troy and Fort Qu'Appelle, both some 30 mi (48 km) to the east), as the territorial seat of government: these were widely considered to be much better locations for what was anticipated would be a major centre for the Canadian plains. They were situated in amply watered and treed rolling parklands whereas "Pile-of-Bones," as Regina was then called, was in the midst of arid and featureless grassland. However, Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney had acquired land adjacent to the route of the future CPR line at Pile-of-Bones, which was distinguished only by collections of bison bones near a small spring run-off called Wascana Creek that eventually flows into the Qu'Appelle River near Lumsden, Saskatchewan. There was an "obvious conflict of interest" in Dewdney's choosing the site of Pile-of-Bones as the territorial seat of government and it was a national scandal at the time. It was renamed Regina after Queen Victoria.

**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan:** Saskatoon has a substantial Metis population and is close to the historically significant Southbranch Settlements to the north, as well as the Prairie Ronde settlement near Dundurn, Saskatchewan. In the summer of 1882 a party of ten Temperance Colonization Society's members (including six prospective settlers) surveyed the area midway between Clark's Crossing (present-day Clarkboro) and Moose Woods (Whitecap First Nation) for a townsite. Upon consultation with Chief Whitecap, the colonists chose a point on the valley where the banks were relatively low, and the river could more easily be crossed, the area later known as the Idylwyld Flats.

One of the largest Métis settlements in Saskatchewan, was once known as Round Prairie (Prairie-Ronde). All that is left is the cemetery and the memories of the people who lived there. The first settlers arrived from various places in Canada and the United States. The leader, or chief, was Charles "Wapass" Trottier. He was born in Red River and was also a good friend and relative of Gabriel Dumont. Everyone either spoke Cree or French. They got along very well with the Sioux at Moosewood Reserve, now known as Whitecap Reserve, which was close by. Many Métis people who were born in

Saskatoon, have ancestors that lived in Round Prairie. La Prairie Ronde was dissolved soon after the 1885 Resistance; yet nearby Frenchman's Flats was resettled in 1902–12, only to find the last Métis families moving out again (mostly to Saskatoon) by 1939.

**Saskatchewan's Metis Colonies:** Metis rehabilitation colonies (or projects) were started in 1939 under the Patterson government. The CCF (now the New Democratic Party) continued this policy when the Douglas government came to power in 1944. Most of the colonies were located in the southern rural municipalities and were a step in addressing what was termed the "Metis Problem," largely defined in terms of destitution, marginality and lack of health care. The first colony developed in 1939 was at Green Lake in the Ile à la Crosse district: what was then described as the extreme north. About 125 Metis families were involved in this project.

A similar settlement was established in the south at Lebret where the government purchased land that was a former Oblate farm in 1945. By the late 1940s, there were colonies established at Crooked Lakes, Lestock, Crescent Lake, Baljennie, Willow Bunch, Duck Lake and Glen Mary. Over 2,500 Metis people were involved in this experimental program. In the south, the Saskatchewan Department of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation operated the colonies. Among the reasons for the failure of these colonies was that elected resident councils and individual business activities and entrepreneurship were discouraged. In addition, Metis were only trained for low-wage occupations and there was a weak or non-existent economic base. In 1960, the Director of Rehabilitation concluded that the colonies were a form of segregation that only perpetuated Metis poverty.

**South Branch House and Gardepuys Crossing:** Both the HBC and the NWC operated posts near the site of Gardepuys's Crossing on the South Branch of the Saskatchewan River. This crossing was located downstream (to the north) from St. Laurent.

**Southbranch Settlement:** Southbranch was the name ascribed to a series of French Metis settlements in the south Saskatchewan Valley. Metis settlers began making homes here in the 1860s and 1870s, many of them fleeing economic and social dislocation from Red River, Manitoba. The Settlements stretched along both sides of the South Saskatchewan River in river lot style from Tourond's Coulee (Fish Creek) and Petit Ville, north through Batoche and St. Laurent, Saskatchewan to St. Louis, Saskatchewan which was its northern boundary. They were in close proximity to several Cree reserves, as well as settler and Anglo-Metis settlements to the north around Halcro and Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

**St. Catherines, Saskatchewan:** St. Catherine's Anglican church was located approximately seven kilometres west of the City of Prince Albert. St. Catherines is associated with early English Métis settlers in the Prince Albert area. The English Métis communities originated in the 1860s with the founding of the Isbister Settlement immediately west of the present city of Prince Albert. That community was named for James Isbister, an English Métis who freighted for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort

Carlton in the 1850s, but had settled in this area by 1860. The Isbister Settlement became the nucleus for other English Métis who migrated from the Red River Settlement area of Manitoba following the Riel resistance of 1869-70. St. Catherine's Anglican Church became a hub of activity in the community and is presently commemorated by a cairn featuring the remains of the original bell.

**St. Laurent (de Grandin), Saskatchewan:** The Metis established this community in the spring of 1871 on the South Saskatchewan River some 40 kilometers from the HBC's Fort Carlton. It was to become one of the most significant Metis settlements in the North West Territories. Soon after it's founding some 250 Metis families moved into the area around St. Laurent. Initially these settlers practiced subsistence agriculture, participated in the buffalo hunt and worked for the Hudson's Bay Company as cart men and labourers. By 1873, the community was experiencing real problems due to the demise of the buffalo herds and the implementation of HBC policies to reduce ages and increase the prices of manufactured goods. In effect the company was exploiting a captive market and captive labour force. The company's chief Factors were made magistrates, the company quickly outlawed labour strikes and threatened to imprison anyone who led a strike against the company. Further the company undermined the communities Laws of the Prairie and Hunting; this led to a full scale slaughter of buffalo on the plains

**St. Louis (de Langevin), Saskatchewan:** The Metis established St. Louis in the late 1800s on the South Saskatchewan River. It is located on the old cart trail from Fort Garry to Edmonton and was also called McKenzie's Crossing. At this crossing there was a ferry operated by Norman McKenzie who was previously employed at Manitoba House. Ann Charter, an informant for this book, attended residential school at St. Louis. Many of her relatives were holders of the original Metis river lots at St. Louis.

**Swift Current, Saskatchewan:** Swift Current is located 170 kilometres (110 mi) west from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and 218 kilometres (135 mi) east of Medicine Hat, Alberta, on the Swift Current Creek which originates in the Cypress Hills and travels 100 miles into the South Saskatchewan River. The creek was a historic camping place for First Nations peoples. The name of the creek comes from the Cree, who called the south Saskatchewan River "kisiskâciwan," meaning "it flows swiftly." The fur traders who used this spot on their westward treks in the 1800s, and called it "Rivière au Courant." The Montana trail to the South Saskatchewan River starts from Montana and crosses the International Boundary south of the present town of Bracken, Saskatchewan. It then goes just east of Swift Current and then veers northeast to the Elbow on the South Saskatchewan River. It continues north as the Elbow-Fort a-la-Corne trail. The Swift Current to Battleford Trail heads north from Swift Current crossing the South Saskatchewan River at Saskatchewan Landing. It went through the present town of Fiske and continued north, about 10 miles west of Biggar into Battleford. It was one of the main trails in the 1800s and served as a route between the important centers north and south. The deep ruts made by the Red River carts and other vehicles could still be seen in 1965, along many stretches of the trail.

**Talle de Salle or Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan:** After prairie fires swept through the Wood Mountain in 1879-80, the Metis from there moved to Willow Bunch on the eastern slope of the mountain upland. The valley where the willows grew also had a dry salt lake which attracted bison herds to the valley bottom. The Metis also moved into the area by the Big Muddy River and established Grant's village, Poitras' village, Bellegarde's village and Bonneau's village. After the fires, about thirty families established themselves at Willow Bunch. They were still dependant upon the buffalo hunt and the sale of pemmican. Consequently, Louis Legare moved his trading business to that location

**Tourond's Coulee, Beaver Creek, Fish Creek, Petite Ville:** This Metis community was located about 16 km. south of Batoche on the South Saskatchewan River. It was also known as Tourond's Settlement (Petite Ville was located across the river) as they were the largest and most prosperous family in that area. Fish Creek was the site of a famous battle during the 1885 Resistance. The battle occurred where the Clarke's Crossing Trail crosses the coulee.

**Whitewood, Saskatchewan:** See entry under Coquille Pilée.

**Willow Bunch:** See entry under Montagne de Bois Coulée Chapelle and Talle de Saules.

**Wood Mountain (Montagne de Bois), Saskatchewan:** Wood Mountain is located in southern Saskatchewan and was another wintering place for Metis buffalo hunters. In 1871, the Hudson's Bay Company established a trading post there and it became the prairie depot for the Northwest Boundary Commission. See a more extensive entry under Montagne de Bois Coulée Chapelle and Talle de Saules.

As the Metis from Manitoba had to move further and further west in search of bison, they established wintering camps in places such as Wood Mountain. After the 1869-70 Resistance even more people moved to these locations.

Wood Mountain (elevation 1000 metres), is located about 135 km southwest of present day Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, near the Canada-U.S. border on the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel. It has flat-topped hills, dissected by coulees, which rise some 400 metres above the surrounding prairie. The Métis settled on the slopes of Montagne de Bois in 1870, building houses from the plentiful poplar trees. In 1871 the HBC trading post at Wood Mountain became the prairie depot of the Boundary Commission. The Fort Qu'Appelle – Wood Mountain Trail was a provisional supply route during the height of the fur trade. It was approximately 250 km in length across vast expanses of southern prairie. From east to west it followed a general southwest direction from Fort Qu'Appelle, going south of Regina, through the Dirt Hills ending in Wood Mountain. The trail was an important provisional route supplying Hudson's Bay Company posts southwest of Fort Qu'Appelle. Lebreton missionaries also used the trail extensively, as it was their only access to numerous Métis settlements.

En 1869, un Métis nommé George Fisher avait visité certaines familles métisses qui hivernaient dans la région de la Montagne de Bois. Selon Fisher, cette région était enchanteuse; le territoire en question étant traversé par une vallée où abondaient le bois et les sources d'eau et où il y avait beaucoup de bisons et de gibier. Une caravane de 300 charrettes avait donc quitté Pembina. Elle transportait 75 familles métisses venant de Pembina, de Saint-Joseph et de Saint-François-Xavier. Tous se dirigeaient vers la Montagne de Bois. Jean-Louis Légaré, traiteur et futur fondateur de Willow Bunch était avec ce groupe de Métis.

In 1869, a Metis named George Fisher<sup>12</sup> had visited certain Metis families who wintered in the area of the Wood Mountain. According to Fisher, this area was inviting; the territory in question was crossed by a valley where wood and sources of water abounded; and where there were many bison and other game. A caravan of 300 carts had thus left Pembina. They transported 75 Metis families coming from Pembina, Saint-Joseph and Saint-François-Xavier. All moved towards the Wood Mountain. Jean-Louis Légaré, a trader and future founder Willow Bunch was with this group of Metis.<sup>13</sup>

Les nouveaux venus s'établissent premièrement à un endroit appelé la Coulée-Chapelle. Dans son histoire de Willow Bunch, l'abbé Clovis Rondeau explique que la Coulée-Chapelle se trouvait dans la paroisse de Saint-Victor, à quelques milles de Willow Bunch. Dans son article dans le Patriote de l'Ouest, Louis Schmidt, ancien secrétaire de Louis Riel, donne un autre nom à la Coulée-Chapelle. «Ainsi, si je ne me trompe, St-Victor se trouve tout près de la “Coulée des Prêtres”, c'est-à-dire l'endroit où le premier missionnaire de ces régions - la Montagne de Bois - s'est d'abord établi et a passé l'hiver; je crois que c'était le Père Lestanc, qui a été remplacé peu après par le P. St-Germain.»

The newcomers establish firstly at a place called the Coulée-Chapelle. In the history of Willow Bunch, Abbot Clovis Rondeau explains that the Coulée-Chapelle was in the parish of Saint-Victor, some miles west of Willow Bunch. Louis Schmidt, former secretary of Louis Riel, give another name to the Coulée-Chapelle. “Thus, if I am not mistaken, St-Victor is very close to the “Coulée des Prêtres”, said to be the place where the first missionary of this area - the Wood Mountain - established and overwintered; I

---

<sup>12</sup> George Fisher (1830-1898) was born in Prairie du Chein, Wisconsin in 1830, the son of George Fisher and Genevieve Courville. George married Emilie Boyer, the daughter of Baptiste Boyer (b. 1805) and Helene McMillan (b.1811) and had 11 children. He passed away on 1898 in Lebrét, George was a nephew of Hudson's Bay Company Chief Trader Henry Fisher.

<sup>13</sup> On April 15, 1873, Jean-Louis married Marie Ouellette, the daughter of François Ouellette (born August 7, 1832 at SFX) and Josephine Bottineau (born 1833 at SFX). On October 5, 1875, Marie gave birth to their only child Albert Joseph. Tragedy struck this new family on December 4, 1876, when Marie Ouellette passed away after falling off a horse while she was visiting her father at Fort Walsh. Seven Ouellettes led by Old Joseph Ouellette signed the Cypress Hills Metis Hunting Band petition for a reserve along the border in 1878. Four of the Ouelettes later signed Louis Riel's petition of August 6, 1880 to Nelson A. Miles, (Musselshell River MT), asking for a Métis reservation in central Montana. These men were all sons of Old Joseph Ouellette (b. 1872) and Theresa Houle (b. 1794): Antoine Ouellette (b. 1835), François Ouellette (b. 1832), Joseph Ouellette (b. 1834) and Moïse Ouellette (b. 1830).

believe that this was Father Lestanc, who was replaced shortly after by the Pere St. Germain.”

In 1870 the Metis came to Willow Bunch to settle with their families. At that time the little Saskatchewan town was called "*Talle-de-Saules*" in honour of the bark from the abundant willow trees in the area used for smoking.

In 1870, Antoine Ouellette sent Louis Legare to trade with the people in the area between Wood Mountain and Willow Bunch, a distance of approximately 40 miles known as *La Montagne de Bois*. Jean Louis Legare was hired by his Metis employer, Antoine Ouellette<sup>14</sup>, at a salary of \$25.00 a month to establish a business in this area. He organized a camp at Little Woody which is approximately 15 miles south of Willow Bunch and spent the winter of 1870-1871 collecting furs. In the spring he travelled to Pembina to sell the furs he had collected over the winter months. He continued on to St Francois-Xavier, Manitoba, where he became a partner with George Fisher, who had previously been interested in establishing a post in the Willow Bunch Area. Fisher provided the merchandise, the horses and carts, two men, and promised Legare one third of the profits. Legare and his party arrived to establish a trading post in the area 3 miles east of the Police Post at Wood Mountain. He remained there for 9 years.

During the fall of 1879, a vast prairie fire destroyed all of the grazing area in a considerable portion of *La Montagne de Bois*, resulting in many of the Metis moving east and setting up camp in the St. Victor and Willow Bunch areas. In 1880 Legare constructed a temporary building (a store and adjoining house), the first wooden house in Willow Bunch. A private water line existed to the Legare Home. Legare's efforts resulted in many French Canadian settlers coming to this area.

In 1884, Legare drove one hundred horses to Manitoba and received forty five head of domesticated cattle in return. This began the establishment of ranches in the Willow Bunch area and served as a viable means of livelihood for some of the Metis there.

Nevertheless, many Metis remained in half starving condition owing to the collapse of the trade in buffalo skins. Many Metis moved northward and set up camps in the Moose Jaw area. When the Resistance of 1885 was building momentum citizens of Moose Jaw became perturbed. In response Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney came to Moose Jaw and telegraphed Jean Louis Legare to come from Willow Bunch to induce these Metis to return south. Legare told the Metis that he wanted them to take something back to Willow Bunch and that it was top secret. Of course, they were not happy when they reached Willow Bunch and found out that they had been brought here under false pretences.

Legare was able to settle them down by hiring forty men, which represented all Metis

---

<sup>14</sup> Antoine "Ratte" Ouellette was an independent trader operating back and forth to St. Paul. He was heavily involved in the Metis/Dakota/Lakota trade. He was a scout and guide for the North West Mounted Police and when Sitting Bull came north in 1876 he was reliant on Ouellette and Legare for supplies.

families in the area, at \$2.00 a day as scouts. Legare scattered these families around at such a distance apart as to render them harmless.



Edited and Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell  
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research  
Louis Riel Institute