

Joseph Z. Larocque. (1881-1964)

By Leah Dorion and Lawrence Barkwell

Joseph Z. Larocque was born on November 26, 1881 at Lebret, Saskatchewan. He was the youngest son of Antoine Larocque¹ was a buffalo hunter and fur trader from Pembina, Minnesota. Antoine, born circa 1831 at Red River was the son of Antoine "Tiskune" Larocque Sr. (b. 1806) and. Françoise Laliberte.²



J.Z. LaRocque, provincial police (1914-1921).

Joseph's mother, Antoine's second wife, was Rosalie Laplante (b. 1845) was from White Horse Plains. Joe married Marie Therese Salamon in 1914 at Lebret. They had three children; Josephine, R. James "Jimmie" and Mary "Florence".

Joseph Larocque was the first President of the Saskatchewan Metis Society. While leaders like Jim Brady, Malcolm Norris, Pete Tomkins, Joseph Dion and Felix Callihou were lobbying the Alberta provincial government for the establishment of the Alberta Métis Colonies in the 1930s some concerned Metis based out of Regina such as Joe

¹ Antoine Larocque Sr. and Antoine Larocque Jr. both signed a September 2, 1880 Petition from Peter LaPierre and other Metis concerning Metis land claims that subsequently went unanswered by the government. This petition was addressed to the Marquis of Lorne, "This humble petition of Peter LaPierre, Simon Blondin, John Fisher, Alexander Fisher, John Simpson, Xavier Denomme, and others, Halfbreeds of Qu'Appelle Settlement. Antoine Larocque was the son of Antoine Larocque and Françoise Laliberte. He married Rosalie Plante, the daughter of Antoine Plante and Rosalie Gagnon on September 7, 1859 at Assumption parish Pembina. (RG 15, Interior, Series D-II-8-a , Volume 1322 , Reel C-14929: Scrip affidavit for Larocque, Rosalie; born: July 1845; wife of Antoine Larocque; father: Antoine Plante (Métis); mother: Josette Gagnon (Métis); claim no: 719; scrip no: 5593 to 5600; date of issue: June 26, 1876; amount: \$160.) RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-b , Volume 1329 , Reel C-14939: Larocque, Antoine - Concerning his fractional 1/4 section - Father, Antoine Larocque, (Métis) - Mother, Francois Laliberte, (Métis) - 1878, entered possession of SW 1/4 1-21-13 W2, land which fronts on lake at Fort Qu'Appelle - 1881, survey left only E 1/2 of said SW 1/4, cutting off buildings from the lake - Claims \$80.00 as the difference - Scrip for \$80.00 - Claim 1554.

² This family is listed in the 1850 Pembina census as Family # 114.

McKenzie, Joseph Z. Larocque and Joe Ross began the enormous task of organizing the Saskatchewan Metis.

Similar to the Alberta Metis during the 1930s, the Saskatchewan Metis also faced extreme poverty, experienced the loss of their lands due to the failure of the scrip system and had minimal access to education and training. In 1931, a group of Metis met in Regina to talk about these issues affecting the Metis people. The central issue discussed around the table was how scrip failed to provide Metis people with a land base. Finally, in 1937, the group formally incorporated into the Saskatchewan Metis Society (SMS) and elected Joseph Z. Larocque as president. Edmond Klyne, Robert Larocque, James Powless, Jerome Larocque, and Joe Ross were members of the newly elected executive. This group decided to formally take on the enormous challenge of organizing a provincial wide political organization in order to have their grievances addressed by government.

He was a natural leader for the organization because he had a formal education and also spoke both Cree and English. Joseph joined the Saskatchewan Provincial Police in January of 1914 and served with them for seven years. Especially important to the Metis cause was that he possessed first hand knowledge about the failure of the Metis scrip system because as a child Larocque was issued land scrip for 240 acres. Even though he was a minor, organized speculators quickly purchased his scrip for \$300. Consequently, he never received the land like many other Metis families in the Qu'Appelle Valley area. As a result, obtaining land for Metis families became an issue of high priority for Larocque which was clearly stated in a Regina Leader-Post article on May 16, 1939 entitled, "Aid for Metis Claims: Premier Hopes for Early Settlement of Land" which states that:

The proposed plan of settlement of the Alberta Metis problem was cited by Mr. Larocque as one that would well suit the Metis of Saskatchewan, and suggested a permanent committee be appointed by the convention to consult, when necessary, with the government on matters pertaining to the settlement of the Metis question. He advocated a residential boarding school for the Metis, government supported and directed, Education of the Metis, he said, was of the greatest importance, and possibly the first work that should be undertaken in the settlement work.

In 1938 and 1939, the newspapers in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina discussed the formulation of the Alberta colonies and the passing of the Metis Betterment Act and leaders like Larocque lobbied to have the Saskatchewan government establish a similar settlement plan. At the time, he tried as much as possible to use his Liberal government connections to get political support for Metis Claims and the SMS. He tried to inform diverse audiences about the Metis cause and even presented to community organizations such as the Yorkton Kinsmen Club to speak about Metis history, claims and culture. Larocque was also a good writer and submitted some articles to the *Regina Leader Post* about Christmas at Lebret and the Metis Buffalo Hunt in order to educate the uninformed public about the Metis.

Eventually, Larocque and the SMS members were quite successful at getting the attention of Saskatchewan premier W. J. Patterson on the issue of Metis Claims. On June 15, 1939 a delegation of Metis, including M. Vandale, Provincial President, Joe Larocque, Past President, Jim Larocque, Provincial Secretary, Ed Klyne, J.F. Ross, Mr. Foster, and Mrs. Boivin and Miss Hallhouse (Provincial Delegates) met with the premier

in Regina at his office. Unfortunately, the premier felt that the Metis did not have a valid land claim or a legal basis for this claim. At the same time the provincial government was demanding proof that the SMS represented all of the Metis people of Saskatchewan. The province was concerned about going into negotiations for future programs and services with the Metis. They wanted to deal with only one representative Metis political organization. At that point the SMS was a young organization which had a majority of its members based in the south. In order to make the SMS more representative a lot more internal organizing remained ahead of the group if the provincial government was going to take them seriously. In the summer of 1939, shortly after this convention with the premier, Larocque was named an honorary president in recognition of his organizational and lobbying efforts.

After 1939, the SMS faced a major set back as WWII (1939-1945) pulled away a large portion of the SMS membership. However, in 1943 the SMS went through a rebuilding phase and in June 25th to 26th, at a SMS meeting held in Saskatoon, Larocque was still politically active and passed the following resolution about Metis fishing rights:

We understand that some forty odd years ago, the Laurier Government appointed a Commission to investigate the Fishery Industry in Saskatchewan. The Commission consisted of the late Judge McGuire and the late Senator Prince. Their final recommendations were that the Metis of Saskatchewan be allowed to fish much the same as the Indians for food purposes. But when the natural resources were turned over to the Province, this privilege was abolished. It is desirable that these privileges be restored. This resolution was moved for adoption by Mr. A. Pritchard, seconded by Mr. LaRocque and carried.

Even as late as 1954, Larocque was still corresponding with different Metis community leaders about the effects of government sponsored relocation programs to Green Lake and the experimental farms. Today we hear about the North West Metis Land Claim (1994) and the Grumbo case (1998) on Metis hunting rights. It is too easy to forget that leaders like Joe Larocque tried to move on these issues over sixty years ago. He died in Lebret, Saskatchewan in 1964.

Shown below is a newspaper article from *The Winnipeg Tribune* -- September 9, 1939, pg.30.

Early Firearm Regina Relic

REGINA — J. Z. LaRocque, of Lebret, 60 miles north-west of here, owns a double-barrelled, muzzle-loading Saxton gun, the kind distributed in the early 60's in the Northwest by the Hudson's Bay Company.

LaRocque bought the ancient firearm on the Pasqua Indian reserve. It is said to have been used by the Crees of southern Saskatchewan in their last buffalo hunt about 1876.

The gun was capable of killing a buffalo at 300 yards. LaRocque also obtained the powder horn, a real buffalo horn, but the lead and cap pouches are still on the Indian reserve.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

CERTIFICATE }
No. 308

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas, It was provided, by the eighth article of the Treaty concluded at the Old Crossing of Red Lake River, between the United States and the RED LAKE AND PEMBINA BANDS OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS, on October 2, 1863, that "In consideration of the foregoing cession it is hereby agreed that the United States shall grant to each male adult half-breed or mixed-blood who is related by blood to said CHIPPEWAS of the said RED LAKE or PEMBINA bands, who has adopted the habits and customs of civilized life, and who is a citizen of the United States, a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres of land, to be selected at his option within the limits of the tract of country hereby ceded to the United States;" and Whereas, it was provided by the Supplemental Treaty with the said RED LAKE AND PEMBINA BANDS OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS, concluded at Washington, April 12, 1864, "that in lieu of the lands provided for the mixed-bloods by article eight" of the "Treaty concluded at the Old Crossing of Red Lake River, (of October 2, 1863.) Scrip shall be issued to such of the mixed-bloods as shall so elect, which shall entitle the holder to a like amount of land, and may be located upon any of the lands ceded by said Treaty, but not elsewhere, and shall be accepted by said mixed-bloods in lieu of all future claims for annuities;" and Whereas, there has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States a CERTIFICATE OF THE REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at *Sioux, Dakota Territory* 2188 whereby it appears that SCRIP-CERTIFICATE No. 308, in the name of *Antoine La Roque* for one hundred and sixty acres, issued by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs under the aforesaid Treaty, has been located and surrendered by the said *Antoine La Roque* in full satisfaction for the *South East quarter of Section Twenty, in the 31st and 32nd Township and thirty nine, North of Range West of the Sixth Principal Meridian in Dakota Territory, containing one hundred and sixty acres.*

According to the Official Plat of the public lands returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tract has been located by the said *Antoine La Roque*.

Now, know ye, That the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in consideration of the premises, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said *Antoine La Roque* and to his heirs, the said Tract above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said *Antoine La Roque* and to his heirs and assigns forever. *to my heirs, and assigns, and to my heirs and assigns forever, with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said Antoinette La Roque, and to her heirs and assigns forever, in testimony whereof, I, Ulysses S. Grant, President of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.*

Given under my hand at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the *twenty fifth* day of *June*, in the year of our LORD one thousand eight hundred and *eighty six*, and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES the *one hundred and seventh*.

By the President: *Ulysses S. Grant*

Wm. H. Crook, Secretary.

L. S.

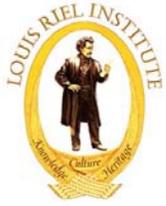
L. Harrison, Recorder of the General Land Office.
Antoine

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Antoine Larocque's land title in North Dakota obtained with his Chippewa Half Breed Scrip (#308, 1864)

Reference:
Leah Dorion, "Joseph Z. Larocque", *Eagle Feather News*, February 2000: 28.

See also;
"Metis Struggles of the Twentieth Century: Saskatchewan Metis Society 1935-1950. Part One: Early Beginnings." *New Breed*. August 1978. pp 16-19.



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