

## Charles “Wahpass” Trottier (Trotchie). (b. 1839)

Charles Trottier was born December 4, 1839 at St. François Xavier, the son of Andre Trottier<sup>1</sup> (b. 1874) and Marguerite St. Denis dite Paquette. Andre and his family were enumerated in the Pembina census of 1850 as family # 84; he is listed as a hunter. Charles married Ursule Laframboise, the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Laframboise and Suzanne Beaudry on August 26, 1860 at St. François Xavier. They had eleven children, born at St. François Xavier, Prairie Ronde, Lebret, Cypress Hills and St. Peter's Mission in Montana. His older brother, Ande Trottier Jr. (b. 1816) was married Isabel Falcon, the daughter of Pierre Falcon and Marie Grant.<sup>2</sup>

In 1878, Charles Trottier, Augustin Laframboise and other Métis buffalo hunters at Cypress Hills wrote a petition asking for a special Métis reserve of land. They requested a re-opening of the buffalo hunt between November 14<sup>th</sup> and February 15<sup>th</sup> each year and the granting of Métis “reserve” land—a strip of land 150 miles long along the American border beginning where the Pembina River crosses the border. This strip was to be fifty miles from south to north.

Subsequent to the petition of 1878, Charles and his group could be found at Wolf Point, Montana with the Nakota during the hunting and trading seasons. Michel Hogue reports:

Until the fall of 1881... a Métis man by the name of Charles Troché had relied on Assiniboine chief Red Stone's<sup>3</sup> permission to live and hunt on the reservation. Chief Red Stone and the Lower Assiniboines... had longstanding ties to the Red River Métis and a history of sharing territory with them.<sup>4</sup> Troche was a petty trader,

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<sup>1</sup> André Trottier was born in 1784 in the NWT, the son of André Trottier and Louise (Chippewa). He married Marguerite St. Denis dit Paquette, the daughter of André Paquette and Lizette (Cree) in 1811 at Red River. This family was enumerated in the Pembina Census of 1850 as Family # 84. They list Andre age 66, a hunter, Marguerite age 50, Joseph age 22, a hunter, Michel age 19, a hunter, Antoine age 14, and Charles age 10. Andre and his brother Joseph were participants in the Battle of Seven Oaks as part of Cuthbert Grant's party. From the Coltman Report:

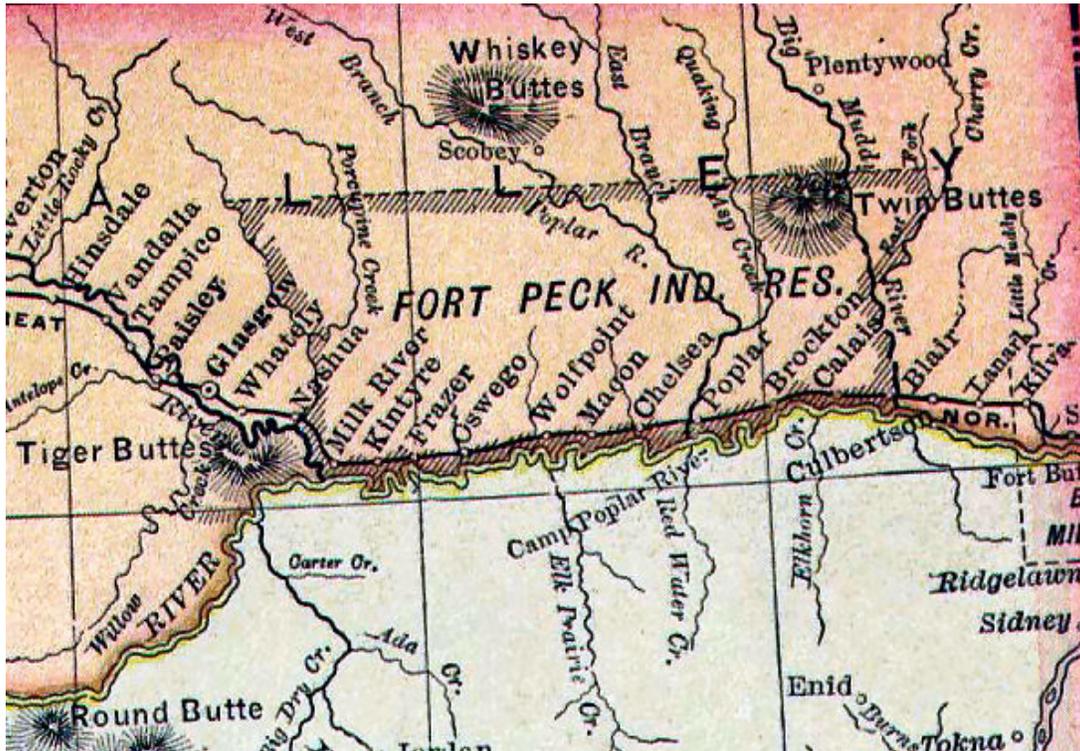
*André Trottier, “Half-Breed,” stated the following to Commissioner William Coltman as despotism (sic) into the investigation of the fur trade war: That on his arrival near the encampment he was met by Mr. Alexander MacDonnell, who had with him Seraphim Lamar and Bostonais Pangman, and asked him, “What news?” to which he answered, “we fought yesterday”; and being further questioned, he answered, “that there were 22 of the English killed, that on their side, his brother [Joseph Trottier] was wounded, and a half-breed of the name Batoche, killed.” Bostonais Pangman was quoted as saying that Batoche was his cousin and he must be revenged.*

<sup>2</sup> Both active at the Battle of the Grand Coteau in 1851 although not yet married. Isabelle's brother Jean Baptiste Falcon was the leader of the Métis during this battle.

<sup>3</sup> By 1869, smallpox greatly reduced the numbers in the Upper Assiniboine band. To avoid the same fate, the Lower Assiniboine avoided the Upper Assiniboine and followed their chief, Red Stone, to live with the Yanktonai Sioux who had moved into the north eastern part of Montana to hunt buffalo. In 1871, the Fort Peck agency was established for the Sioux who were unable to get along with anyone other than their newly found friends, the Lower Assiniboine. The alliance between these two tribes has remains in effect to this day.

<sup>4</sup> The Métis allied with the Cree, Assiniboine, and Ojibwa as part of the Nehiyaw Pwat Confederacy (Nehiyaw Pwat means "Cree Assiniboine" in Cree) also known as the Iron Confederacy. The Nehiyaw

and it is possible that, as such, he was also useful to the local tribes. He had successfully avoided expulsion [from Montana] in 1879 by demonstrating that the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre chiefs had permitted him to remain on the reservation [Fort Peck]. In the fall of 1881, though, it appears that he was less successful. He told Lieutenant Robert Bates that he did “not like to be driven off, but that he would return to his camp and move north of the line at once.”<sup>5</sup>



Charles was the leader of the Métis from Prairie-Ronde, south of Saskatoon; he had wintered there since the mid-1850s. Charles Trottier (born 1839) and Michel Trottier (born 1832) appear on 1863-64 Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa Treaty as numbers 444 and 457 when they were given Red Lake Half-breed Scrip in 1875.

Charles was a trader in the North West Territories, having hunted with his nephew Norbert Welsh for many years. His hunting band often joined with that of Isidore “Ecapow” Dumont when on the plains. Charles spoke excellent English and French as well as over ten Aboriginal languages and was often sent as a messenger by the Métis councils. His first marriage was to Marie-Anne Parenteau, his second to Ursula Laframboise (born 1842 at Havre, Montana). Ursula was the daughter of Jean Baptiste Laframboise (b. 1806) and Suzanne Beaudry.<sup>6</sup> Ursula’s brother, Augustin was living on the Muskeg Lake Reserve and was a Captain of one of the 19 companies led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Métis Resistance. His son Edouard also served in his Company.

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Pwat Confederacy homeland stretched from the Red River on the east, to the Front Range of the Rockies in the west, and straddled the borderlands of what became the United States and Canada.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Hogue, “Between Race and Nation: The Plains Métis and the Canada-United States Border.” Wisconsin: Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009: 259-260.

<sup>6</sup> Her parents were at the Battle of the Grand Coteau in 1851 and she was likely with them.

This family escaped to Montana after 1885. They lived with the group that was sustaining themselves by cutting wood for Fort Shaw. They were accompanied by their sons, Remi, Isidore and Jean Baptiste.

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 (about 60 men in all). He and Whitecap were members of Riel's Exovedate (Provisional Government). Among this group were three of his sons and two of his nephews. It is said that Whitecap and forty of his men had joined the Resistance under duress. However, Norbert Welsh contradicts this account.

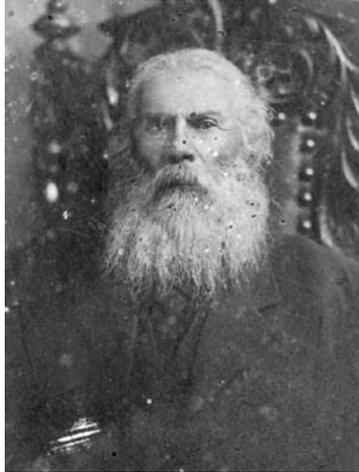
Charles Trottier gives the following account of the battle of Tourond's Coulée on April 24, 1885:

Up to the arrival of the first horses, I was there with Gabriel. Then I went down to the coulée, signalling with my hand to our people, and calling out, "run to the coulee, run to the coulee." Then we tied all our horses there, and we went up the hill on foot to fire, and we began to fire, I do not know how many shots. Suddenly I saw a Sioux killed quite close to me, and then as the gun I was using was not good, I called out to another Sioux to take the gun of the dead Sioux, saying I wanted to use it. He took the gun and lent it to me. It was a double gun with horn and shot-bag. We fired again, and all of a sudden, I saw Gabriel coming towards me (I saw him first on my right); he said that he no more cartridges; I gave him those I had, for I wanted to use the double gun, and I called out to the people, "They want to pillage the coulee; we must go down and take all the horses and prevent them." And I told a young man to take Gabriel's horse, and I took mine; and going down the coulee I saw Gabriel and he asked me where his horse was? I told him the young men were taking it away. It was the last time I saw Gabriel, and then I tied my horse in the wood and went up the hill on the south side, and firing began on both sides, and suddenly some one called out to me, "There they are coming down the coulee with their cannon!" I looked and saw them coming down, and I shouted to the young men, "Take courage, take courage and pray to God." Then they began firing at us with their cannon and rifles, and the balls fell like hail. It was about two in the afternoon, and I began shouting "fire, fire" and when our men began firing I saw that the police fell, and I heard the cry, "They are going to run," and I called out "fire, fire," and shouted for joy, and when the soldiers retreated out of the coulee, I asked the people where Gabriel was, but no one knew, and I asked continually where my children and nephews were, and I thought all our people had been killed except a few, for nobody answered me but two of my boys, and every time we stopped firing we prayed to God. Suddenly I heard a young man singing in French the song of the Bois Brule, the song of the Falcon. That gave me courage. I kept shouting, "courage, courage!" Afterwards it began to rain and hail, and I said to the people, "Don't fire now, we must wait until they come, and if they come near we'll fire altogether. It was about 5 o'clock in the evening, I called out, "Where is Johnny?" (My brother's boy), and I heard him answer about a hundred yards from us. Immediately after his answer they fired three cannon shots and some rifle shots in that direction. Some time afterwards I stood up and went to see all the people, and I said to them, "my friends we shall start away this evening, but before we leave this we must pray to God for our dead

and our wounded, and also for ourselves, so that He may give us a way out of this,” and I told them that “as to the wounded, those who can walk we must not leave them, we shall carry them to the groves and cover them well, and we shall go away quietly all together.” I then counted the men and found but 48, with the wounded, and I said to them, “do not stir, I shall go and see my horse.”...My coat was on the saddle, and while I was untying it, I saw our people on the hill shouting joyfully. When they came up I shook hands with them saying, “We are only forty-eight, and I think many have been killed.” As I spoke, I saw six of our people come out of another wood, bringing our number up to fifty-four. (CSP, 1886, (No. 43), p. 20.)



Charles Trottier home in Havre, Montana, when Charles applied for scrip (see below). Louis Riel had stayed in this house when visiting Havre. Photo courtesy Jackie Trotchie family.



Charles Trottier Sr.

Charles 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. On December 16, 1885, James Anderson wrote to Lieut. Governor Dewdney and indicated that there were 225 Half Breeds living at St. Peters Mission near the Sun River and noted that 25 of these families were Resistance participants from the South Saskatchewan. He names Charles Trottier and sons, Louis Sayer, Robert Jackson, John Ross Jr. and Modeste Rocheleau. Anderson reported that they were surviving by cutting wood to sell at Fort Shaw.<sup>7</sup> Charles Trottier later returned to Prairie-Ronde and applied for land after his return in 1903.

At point when the Métis were desperate for work in Montana Charles assisted Montana promoter Don Davenport in efforts to form a “Wild West Show” to travel to Peoria, Illinois. The racist element in Montana was elated at the announcement of these plans. The *Anaconda Standard* ran the following column on April 6, 1895 (page 7):

#### **Good Riddance The New Wild West Show to Absorb a Swarm of Pests**

**Great Falls, April 4.**—Charles Trottier of Box Elder, Choteau county, a half-breed, who was one of the men charged with illegal voting at that precinct in 1892, when the political complexion of the legislature hinged on the result in that precinct, is in Butte on a mission in which the people of Montana will wish for him the fullest measure of success—pressed down, heaped – and running over. It is nothing more or less than a scheme to remove the Cree Indians [meaning Michif-Cree] from the state.

*The Standard* some days ago told of Don Davenport’s plan to secure a number of Crees for a “wild west” show at Peoria, Ill. Trottier is one of his lieutenants and has gone to secure the Crees now encamped near Butte. From Butte he will proceed to Medicine Hat on the same mission. Forty-two families of the “varmint” are now corralled at Havre, and by the time Davenport has filled his contract, Northern Montana, at least will be rid of the pests, which the authorities would not remove, but which long-suffering citizens were preparing to take summary and stringent measures to exterminate.

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<sup>7</sup> Glenbow Institute, Edgar Dewdney fonds, Series 22, Riel Rebellion, James Anderson’s Reports – 1885, M320.

### **Trottier's Sons and daughters:**

#### **Trottier, Remi.** (b. 1861)

Remi was the son of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise. Remi was active with his father and brothers during the Batoche Resistance. He fought at both Tourond's Coulee and Batoche. After the defeat he fled south to Montana. In 1892, at Maple Creek he married Marie Magdeleine Laframboise.

#### **Trottier, Isidore.** (b. 1863)

Isidore was the son of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise. Isidore signed the 1878 Cypress Hills Métis hunting band petition for a reserve. Isidore was active with his father and brothers during the Batoche Resistance. He fought at both Tourond's Coulee and Batoche. After the defeat he fled south to Montana. He married Carolyn LeMire. Isidore died 14 January 1948.

#### **Trottier, Jean Baptiste.** (b. 1864)

Jean Baptiste was the son of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise. He was active with his father and brothers during the Batoche Resistance. After the defeat he fled south to Montana.

#### **Trottier, Helene (Sansregret)** (b. 1867). Spouse Hilaire Beaubrillant dit Sansregret. (b. 1863)

Helene Trottier was born at St. François Xavier on February 20, 1867, the daughter of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise. Her father was active in the Resistance and the family fled to Montana after 1885. She then married Hilaire Sansregret, the son of Pierre Sansregret *dit* Beaubrillant and Caroline Parenteau. Sansregret was a member of Captain Bernard Paul's company, one of the 19 *dizaines* led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Métis Resistance. He also fled to Montana after the fighting ended and they married on January 12, 1886 at St. Peter's Mission in Montana.

#### **Trottier, Mathilde.** (b. 1869).

Mathilde was born on February 9, 1869 at St. François Xavier, the daughter of Charles Trottier and Ursule Laframboise. She married Alphonse Carron, the son of Pierre Carron and Petronilla Martin in 1887 at Willow Creek. Mathilde died after 1914 in Round Prairie.

#### **Trottier, Charles.** (b. 1870)

Charles was born on November 6, 1870 at Prairie Ronde near Saskatoon and died at Duck Lake in 1877.

#### **Trottier, Ursule.** (b. 1872)

Ursule was born on April 3, 1872 at Prairie Ronde near Saskatoon and died in 1872 at Lebret.

**Trottier, Andre.** (b. 1873)

Andre Jr. was born on April 15, 1873 at Prairie Ronde near Saskatoon and baptized on May 3, 1873 at Lebret. He married Susie Pauline Wallace, born 1 August 1879 in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, the daughter of Frank Wallace and Madeleine Savoy. Andre Jr. died 1937 in Chinook, Montana.

Trottier, Andrew; address: Havre, Montana; born: April, 1873 near Saskatoon; father: Charles Trottier (Métis); mother: Ursule Laframboise (Métis); scrip cert.: form C, no. 644; claim no. 1057.

**Marie Rosine Trottier.** (b. 1876)

Rosine was born on March 30, 1876 at Lebret and died in 1878.

**Trottier, Marie Cecilia.** (b. 1877)

Marie was born on May 3, 1877 at Cypress Hills, Near Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, died August 1877 at Fort Walsh.

**Trottier, Charles;** heir to his deceased daughter, Ursule Trottier; address: **Havre, Montana;** born: 3 April, 1872 at Saskatoon; died: 1873 at Batoche; father: Charles Trottier (Métis and deponent); mother: Ursule Laframboise (Métis); scrip cert.: form D, no. 194; claim no. 556.

**Trottier, Charles;** heir to his deceased children: Marie Rosine, born: 1876 at Cypress Hills; died: 4 months old; Charles, born: 1871 at Saskatoon; died: 1877; address: **Havre, Montana;** father: Charles Trottier (Métis and deponent); mother: Ursule Laframboise (Métis); Marie Rosine, scrip cert.: form D, no. 118; claim no. 449.



Norbert Trottier<sup>8</sup> and his wife Elise (Eliza) Fisher (seated). Rosalie and André Trottier are on the right. The grandchildren pictured are David and Edward; Lucy and Annie. Photo courtesy of Mark Calette



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Louis Riel Institute

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<sup>8</sup> Norbert was the son of Antoine Trottier (b. 1834) and Angelique Laframboise. Antoine was the older brother of Charles Trottier. His grandparents were Andre Trottier and Marguerite Paquette.