

Francis A. Janeaux. (1839-1888)

Janeaux's early life is not known. He was married to Virginia Laverdure (the Metis daughter of Catherine Charette and Pierre Laverdure). Virginia's sister, Eliza, was married to Frank Daniels (Daignon) and their daughter Margaret married Janeaux's employee, Paul Morase. Virginia's brother François was married to Marie Turcotte, whose brother Vital Turcotte married Adele Berger, daughter of Pierre Berger and Judith Wilkie Berger. This gives some idea of the tight family relationships between all of the large northern Montana Metis families with roots back in the Pembina Metis community.

Janeaux was at St. Paul Minnesota in 1857 for one year before going to St. Louis, Missouri. In 1859, he came west by steamboat up the Missouri River. In the early 1860s, he was living at Fort Stevenson, North Dakota (south of Minot). While there he was in a gunfight with a Frenchman and wounded in the hip. He then moved to Montana along the Milk River. Janeaux, who had been granted a trade license, was in charge of the Metis at that location and supplied the buffalo hunters as an itinerant trader. Finally, in 1872, he built what was known as Fort Turnay or Janeaux's Post on Frenchman's Creek northeast of present day Saco. This post was in a compound stockade of about 180 feet to each side. Log cabins were placed along each side. One of the cabins near the gate was used as a store and had a fireplace inside. At this time, Ben Kline was working for Janeaux as a clerk. Most of their trade was with the Metis as they had a federal license for this purpose.

In the latter part of the 1870s, Janeaux ceased operations at this location and it is believed that he moved to the Cypress Hills where he was employed as a trading post clerk. In 1879, due to a lack of buffalo in Canada, Janeaux returned to Montana and settled along the Judith River and established a trading post on Flatwillow. In July of 1879, Janeaux led another band of Metis from the Milk River country to the site of Spring Creek (now Lewistown) via Judith Gap. At that time, they found Paul Morase camped there at the site of the old Reeds Fort.

At the time of Janeaux's arrival, there was only a small hamlet of Metis clustered on the banks of Big Spring Creek. Two miles below this town Reed and Bowles were operating a trading post at the point where the Carroll Trail crossed Big Spring Creek. Janeaux then filed a homestead claim for 160 acres. Paul Morose's claim adjoined Janeaux' claim on the south.

Margaret Swan gives the following account of Janeaux's arrival at Spring Creek:¹

Francis Janeaux, a French Canadian Arrives With His Party

¹ Elizabeth Swan, "A Brief History of the First Catholic Pioneers of Lewistown, Montana," file. 541, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University Library, and in the Joseph Kinsey Howard Papers, MC 27, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana. Elizabeth Swan was a grand-daughter of Pierre Berger and Judith Wilkie.

Our first contingent of Red River Half Breeds were yet unsettled when joined here by another group of their people. They too came from the Milk River country where Janeaux had kept a trading post near where Malta, Montana is now.

He came in with a long string of Red River carts, loaded with the stock of merchandise that he carried. Janeaux always was in the company of Half Breeds along with his hired hand, Paul Morase, also a French Canadian.

Janeaux was married to Pierre Laverdure's daughter Virginia, and Morase to Frank Daignon's daughter Margaret. Janeaux was well thought of as he was a generous man to deal with.

Both of the men had good foresight and immediately saw they had a good opportunity to start a business here. Both took up their homesteads right away. Then Janeaux, after he had his temporary home built across the street from the present post office, started the work for his business and also had a stockade built to protect his property from the Indians. Pierre Laverdure moved up at the mouth of Big Casino Creek where he and his family were located for years.

In the early fall of 1879, General Miles rounded up the Milk River Metis for trading with the Sioux and gave them a choice of going to Canada or the Judith Basin. About 40 families were brought to the Judith Basin by the army. The troops brought them across the river by way of the government steamer near where the Musselshell River enters the Missouri River. After their arrival Janeaux built a stockade trading post and entered a trading agreement with T.C. Powers & Brothers. This post was built with the assistance of Metis labour lead by John Berger, and including Ben Kline, the Laverdures, Daignon and Morase.

By the fall of 1882, Janeaux's post was in financial difficulty and he turned all of his operations over to T.C. Powers & Brothers to settle his \$5,000.00 debt to them. In spite of these financial difficulties, Janeaux donated eight lots to the school district and the first frame schoolhouse was built on this land. Subsequently, on September 24, 1884, Janeaux and his wife Virginia donated 40 acres to the town of Lewistown for the use and benefits of its residents.

From family correspondence it is known that Janeaux intended to return to Canada but was shipwrecked and wounded on the way, therefore returned to Lewistown, paralysed. This affliction eventually led to his death on March 17, 1888 at age 49.

Reference

Kramlich, Ann. "Montana Pioneers," *Lewistown News Argus*, 1998-2001.



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