

## **Metis Settle on Montana's Front Range<sup>1</sup>.**

Métis families who arrived from Canada in flight from the failed Riel rebellion of 1885 were among the earliest people to settle along northern Montana's Front Range, according to local histories of the Choteau area and Teton County (Hansen 1980; Teton Comm. 1988). Both these county histories and the oral histories of members of the petitioning group indicate that these Métis migrants included some ancestors of the petitioner's members. These immigrants moved south down the eastern slopes of the Rockies and settled in various places.

Non-Indian residents of Teton County said that they had been told stories by the local Indians or Métis of how their ancestors had come to the Choteau area after the Riel rebellion and "hid out" along the mountains (Kenck 1994a, 6-7). After the Riel rebellion, another non-Indian resident said, the Métis "fled down here. They settled up in the foothills . . . and wherever they could without being disturbed in the canyons" (Zion 1994, 5). The petitioner's members along the Front Range remain proud today that their ancestors "rode with Riel" (FD 1998).

Some of these Métis immigrants to Montana after the Riel rebellion settled in the canyon on the South Fork of the Teton River, 25 miles west of Choteau (see Figure 6). A local history therefore referred to this settlement as the "Canyon People" (Teton Comm. 1988, 14). In 1896, there reportedly were 10 to 15 cabins in the South Fork canyon (Hansen 1980, 12). At its peak, according to a county history, the South Fork Canyon Métis settlement consisted of over 100 residents and about two dozen dwellings. By 1914, when the local school closed, however, most of the younger South Fork Canyon residents were moving out of the mountains (Hansen 1980, 18; Teton Comm. 1988, 221). Among the first settlers on the South Fork Canyon of the Teton River after 1885 were Basil LaRance, Sr., and his wife Marguerite or Margaret, ancestors of the petitioner.

The first burial in the Métis cemetery in the canyon was that of Marguerite LaRance, who died in 1890 (Teton Comm. 1988, 15, 221; A. Wiseman 1994, 21). These early Métis settlers also included the Bruno or Brunneau, St. Germaine, and Gray families which have descendants in the petitioning group (Teton Comm. 1988, 14-15). Other Métis families joined this Teton Canyon settlement, apparently during the 1890's. Frezine Ameline and Joseph Bruno, who were married about 1890, settled on the South Fork of the Teton and raised eleven children there (Hansen 1980, 12; Teton Comm. 1988, 127). The family of Morris or Jacob "Jack" Jocko and Angeline McMillum, who had four sons born in Canada before 1885, settled in the Teton Canyon about 1892 (Teton Comm. 1988, 215).

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<sup>1</sup> Summary taken from "Summary under the Criteria for the Proposed Finding for Federal Acknowledgment of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana." Prepared in Response to a Petition Submitted to the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs for Federal Acknowledgment that this Group Exists as an Indian Tribe. July 14, 2000: 53-56.

The Dupuyer area of the Front Range was settled by Boushie and Salois families which have descendants in the membership of the petitioning group (see Figure 6). The Salois brothers, Gabriel, Toussaint, and Sam, arrived from Canada and settled on Dupuyer Creek after the Riel rebellion (Dupuyer Comm. 1977, 157; Nault 1977, 16). Ellen Salois, who was born in Alberta, migrated to the Dupuyer area in 1888 (Teton Comm. 1988, 137). The petitioner's researchers say that their informants were able, in 1994, to reveal the location of the Salois family's "contiguous homesteads" on Dupuyer Creek, west of Dupuyer (Franklin and Bunte 1994, 59).

William Boushie was a "Cree-French" Métis from Canada according to his grandson, and Shoshone, Cree, and French according to application records at Rocky Boy's reservation (Nault 1977, 1, 11; Interior 6/26/1917).<sup>2</sup> According to the recollections of his grandson, Boushie first moved from Canada to Red Lake, Minnesota, in the late 1870's. He then led a group of "mostly mixed bloods" up the Missouri River in an expedition that took several years. Boushie first trapped in the area from Augusta to the Canadian border and then moved to St. Peter's Mission when he had children of school age. His first homesteading site was about 15 miles south of Dupuyer, and his second site was about 18 miles west of Dupuyer. His grandson gave no dates for 28 these homesteading efforts, but said that Boushie moved away from Dupuyer in 1917 when he was denied the right to homestead, or failed to prove up his homestead (Nault 1977, 1-14). Another explanation for the move from Dupuyer is that Boushie was enrolled at Rocky Boy's reservation in 1917.

The historian Larry Burt concluded that Little Bear's band of Cree made its winter camp in 1886 on a creek fifteen miles west of Augusta, where it was only one-quarter mile from a camp of Métis on a different creek (Burt 1987, 200). Some ancestors of the petitioner settled in the vicinity of Choteau and Augusta, but the available accounts are not clear on the specific areas of settlement or the specific dates of settlement. The family of Alphonse Carrier and Angeline Grant, who were married in Canada and had sons born at Fort Assiniboine in 1885 and Malta in 1894, moved to the Choteau area in the early 1900's (Teton Comm. 1988, 140-141). Cecelia LaRance Wiseman, descended from Basil LaRance on her father's side, recalled that her mother's family had settled in the Sweetgrass Hills area of Montana before moving to the Choteau area at an unknown date (C. Wiseman 1994a, 15-16).

Because they feared deportation to Canada, a local history argued, the Métis settlers in the canyon on the South Fork of the Teton "stayed close to the canyon" (Teton Comm. 1988, 14). Myrtle Bushman Reardon of Choteau, a member of the petitioning group, recalled that her mother would not talk about having migrated to Montana from Canada after the Riel rebellion because of her fear of being "transported" back to Canada (Reardon 1994, 8-10). An attempted removal of Canadian Indians from Montana gave credence and emphasis to these fears. Congress passed an act in 1896 to provide "for the

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<sup>2</sup> The petitioner's researchers claim that the Boushies or Bushies "appear to have been Pembina Métis," and cite Fred Nault, Boushie's grandson, as their source (Franklin and Bunte 1994, 59, citing Nault 1977, n.p.). However, Nault's account of William Boushie's life makes no mention of Pembina, St. Joseph, or Turtle Mountain.

deportation of refugee Canadian Cree Indians” from Montana (Statutes 1896). Canadian officials expected that Métis individuals would not be removed with the Cree. The U.S. Army collected Indians presumed to be Cree and escorted them to the Canadian border.

Historians of this removal have concluded, however, that most of the Cree returned to Montana (Dusenberry 1954, 6; Allison 1968, 56; Wessel 1974, 18; Burt 1987, 202-203). A county history stated that the Métis settlers in the South Fork canyon attempted to remain “out of sight” during the removal of the Canadian Cree in 1896 (Teton Comm. 1988, 15).

From the available sources, 22 families of the petitioner’s ancestors can be identified as settlers along the Front Range prior to the 1910 Federal census. These 22 families consisted of 39 identifiable individual spouses. An American origin can be attributed to one or both spouses in six of these 22 families.<sup>3</sup> In each of these six families, one spouse or his or her parents appeared either on the 1850 Pembina census or in a historical source which indicated that they had been born in Minnesota Territory or a location in modern North Dakota. The dates of birth of all of these ancestors were 1860 or earlier. An American origin can be attributed to seven of the 39 individual spouses. The available evidence indicates that an additional 11 of these 22 Front Range families had originated in the British Red River Settlement, or had descent from someone there, without any known descent or connection to Pembina or Dakota. These families contained 13 spouses who had origins in the British Red River Settlement. The other five of the 22 Front Range families had descent from ancestors born somewhere in Canada.



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<sup>3</sup> The six families are those of Caroline Campion Gray, Henry M. Ford and his wife Mary Ann Courchene, Moses LaPierre, Pascal LaPier, Alfred Ameline, and Frezine Ameline Bruno. If the analysis is expanded beyond the Front Range to include the Rocky Mountains generally, then there was an additional family of early settlers which included 1850 Pembina resident John Moursette, who was in Flathead County and had a child born there before 1910.