

Jean Baptiste Parisien. (b. 1829)

Jean Baptiste was born on April 15, 1829, the son of Jean Baptiste Parisien Sr. (b. 1805) and Charlotte Nolin. In the 1850 Pembina Census he was enumerated as a hunter as family # 95. His mother Charlotte was residing with them. Listed are:

- Baptiste, age 22.
- Charlotte, age 40.
- Magdalane, age 18, a sister, born September 9, 1832. She married Francois Lafontain dit Shaman.
- Genevive, age 16, a sister, born October 25, 1832. She married Charles Gladu.
- Isabelle, age 14, a sister, born 1836. She married Jean Baptiste Champagne Jr.
- Edward, age 12, a brother born c. 1838.
- Indigne, age 10, born c. 1840.

Jean Baptiste usually accompanied William Davis, a noted leader of the buffalo hunt. In his Ph. D. thesis “Infinity Nation: The Metis in North American History,” Nicholas Vrooman relates a contemporaneous account of the Davis Camp:

[During the travel of] Thomas Holmes’ 1866 overland train, a Mr. L. M. Brown serialized the journey for the Shakopee, Minnesota, weekly newspaper the *Spectator*.¹

On the next day . . . we fell in with two families of the Indian Half-breeds. They had wintered at Ft. Abercrombie and were out on their spring hunt. They each had their wife and children with them, their ‘teepees,’ and nine ‘half-breed carts,’ drawn, some by horses, some by oxen, and one or two by cow. . . . On coming up to them we found that they spoke the French language, and one of them spoke passably good English. Their names were William Davis and Jean Parisian. Mr. Davis is the half brother of Mr. J. Wilkie, one of the members of the last Territorial House of Representatives in Minnesota. Mr. Parisian is a family connection of the famous Jo. Rolette of Pembina. These men had traveled and hunted the prairies from the mouth of the James River to the British Possessions more or less for the last thirty years, and of course knew nearly every acre of ground over which we were intending to journey. . . . Upon consideration by the officers of the train it was concluded to employ our half-breed friends to lead us to Ft. Berthold by what, in their judgment, was the best route under all the circumstances, which they agreed to do, and did so, in a manner entirely satisfactory. . . . Every noon and night, except two, our guides led us into camp where we had plenty of water and feed for our cattle and horses, and although wood is scarce on the James River, in dry weather the ‘buffalo chip’ is a very passable substitute. We had the pleasure several times of witnessing “the chase of the buffalo,’ by our half-breed guides, who were experts in the business; and saw and learned how simple and easy a thing it was to kill a huge buffalo. The experienced and practiced eye of the half-breed will clearly descry a

¹ White, Helen McCann, ed., *Ho! For the Gold Fields, Northern Overland Wagon Trains of the 1860s*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1966: 181-183. Cited in Nicholas Vrooman, “Infinity Nation: The Metis in North American History.” Helena, Montana, 2010: 305.

'patch of buffalo' fully five miles before the ordinary whiteman can see any object whatever.

Davis and Parisian, while hunting food for the Holmes Train, encountered the encampment of Davis' brother, John B. Wilkie. There were about 2,000 Métis, men, women, and children. That band of Métis had just that day harvested around 2,000 buffalo.



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