

Johnny Grant's Move from Montana to Red River

Johnny Grant (1831-1907) was at Red River during the late 1860s. He decided to wind up his businesses in Deer Lodge Montana¹ and move to Red River. Having successfully wintered stock in the Deer Lodge Valley in 1857, Johnny returned there in 1859 and built a home. Hundreds of head of his cattle and horses ranged the valley. He persuaded others, mostly traders, to settle near him, and they founded the town now known as Deer Lodge. Mexican traders numbered among its earliest residents, along with French Canadian Metis families.

He sold his ranch to Conrad Kohrs in 1866 and left his family for several months while he searched for a new place to settle. Choosing the Carmen, Manitoba area, he returned to Deer Lodge. At Red River he hired twelve Metis to return with him to Montana and assist in the move. When he got to Montana he found that his wife, Quarra had died of TB four months earlier.²

These were:

Malcolm Ross (cousin)³
Jackson and his wife a daughter of George Munroe
"Shoshigh" Decoteau, a guide
Angus McKay, brother of James McKay⁴
Augustin Racette⁵
Boniface Plante (1846-1954)⁶
John Swain⁷

¹Where he had built a permanent ranch site at Cottonwood also called Spanish Fork (Deer Lodge Valley) and recruited a number of Metis trading families to join him (Louis Descheneau, Leon Quesnelle, Louis Demers, David Contois, and Michael LeClair). He built two log cabins and corrals at the mouth of the Little Blackfoot River in November, 1859. The location was on a road traveled by several Indian tribes on their way to and from the buffalo country. Grant had a supply of merchandise for sale and traded with the Indians and did a thriving business. The valley made an excellent pasture for the worn out cattle bought from the emigrants on the Overland Trail. When the stock grew fat, herders drove the herds down the trail for resale and the profits were large. Several other men built cabins close by and the settlement was known as Grantsville.

²(d. 2/24/1867). Quarra was a Shoshone, the sister of the noted chief Tenday. She died of tuberculosis at age 27.

³Malcolm Ross (1847-1909) was the son of George Ross and Catherine Breland. Catherine was the sister of Marie Anne, Pascal and Alexandre Breland.

⁴Angus McKay (1836-1897) was the son of James McKay Sr. and Marguerite Gladu. He married Virginie Rolette.

⁵Racette, Augustin (b. 1835) Augustin was the son of Augustin Racette Sr. and Suzanne Groulx. He married Madeleine Par-enteau, the daughter of Joseph Parenteau and Suzanne Daigneault. He was one of the Metis buffalo hunters who signed the 1878 petition for a reserve from the Cypress Hills Metis.

⁶Born on 1846 to Jean Baptiste Laplante and Madeleine Desfonds. Boniface married Angelique Larocque and had 6 children. He passed away on 1954 in St Boniface Manitoba.

⁷Swain (Swane), John "Natumeo". (1829-1885)

John was one of the Metis from Cypress Hills who signed an 1878 petition for their own reserve. John Swain dit Natumeo was born at Lake Manitoba, the son of James Swain Sr. and Josephte Descoteaux. He was married to Louise Laverdure. The Riel family shared the house of his brother James Swain Jr. while

Lochlin McLaurin⁸

Grant says:

When I started for the Red River, quite a number of people came with me from Montana. Some were going to the States and others to the Red River. There were sixty-two wagons and twelve carts, with about five hundred head of horses, two hundred of which were mine. There were one hundred and six men besides women and children. I fed about sixty of the men, and furnished most of them with horses and some with rifles. I had about thirty rifles, some shot guns and a rifle cannon. I was the leader of the party, the men being divided into squads of ten with a captain over each squad.⁹



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living at St. Peter's Mission in Montana. John left Montana and accompanied Riel to Batoche in 1884. John fought during the 1885 Resistance at Batoche and was killed on May 12, the last day of fighting. He is buried at St. Antoine de Padoue Cemetery, Batoche. John was a member of Captain Baptiste Boucher's company, one of the 19 dizaines led by Gabriel Dumont during the 1885 Metis Resistance.

⁸ Lauchlin McLaurin was one of Grant's Captains, he was married to Adelina Grant, daughter of Richard Grant and Helene Kittson. He worked at Flathead House.

⁹ Gerhard J. Ens (Ed.), *John Francis Grant, A Son of the Fur Trade: The Memoirs of Johnny Grant*, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008: 170.