

Peter Lapierre. (d. 1883)

Peter Lapierre was a HBC employee who worked his way from apprentice labourer in 1846 to Trader and Interpreter in 1864-1869 at the Touchwood Hills Post, Swan River district. He was the son of Louis Lapierre a voyageur and HBC Postmaster. Isaac Cowie describes Louis as a French-Canadien postmaster after whom Lapierre House on the Porcupine Branch of the Yukon River was named. Lapierre acted as Cowie's interpreter with Loud Voice. Peter married Adelaide Boyer (b. 1826), the daughter of Baptiste Boyer and Lizette Mainville, in 1849 at Fort Francis. Peter died on November 4, 1883.

Cowie describes him as a "brave, well set up, medium-sized man who loved the glorious sport of charging after buffalo."¹

Children:

- Thomas, born 1851 at Shoal River.
- Betsy, born 1857 at Touchwood Hills, married Toussaint Galarneau
- Euphrosine, born 1859 at Touchwood Hills.
- Marguerite, born 1861 at Shoal River, married Andrew Stephanson.
- Catherine, born 1864 on Shoal River.
- Adeleine, born 1876 at Swift Current.
- Flora, born 1867 at Touchwood Hills.
- Theophile, born 1871 at Macdonald Hills.
- Daniel, born 1873 at Fort Qu'Appelle, died 1875.
- Joseph
- Madeleine, born 1880 at Fort Qu'Appelle
- Pierre, born 1882 at Fort Qu'Appelle.

This was one of the Métis families arrested at Fort Belknap for hunting in Montana. November 24, 1878:

November 24: Cypress Mountains, Patrice Breland writes: The news here, although not very good, because the Buffalos (bison) are very scarce in the neighbourhood, they are plentiful on the other side of the line along the Milk River, but there is great inconvenience to go and hunt in that direction because the Americans defend it, they have made prisoners. Antoine Brillant the elder, Peter Lapierre, Alexander Brillant, Pierre Labruler, Ambroise Chartrant, Charles Demontigny and Joseph Azure, they have all been made prisoners with their families. They were arrested at Fort Belknap, they have been released after 7 or 8 days after, without being fined provided they don't return and tell folks that other prisoners will be put in gaol for two years and their horses and carts taken. I have learned that the Teton (Sioux) go hunting on the other side of the line numbering 300 men. The Teton are not numerous here. They are about 50 lodges and the Sante about 30 lodges, and the remainder of the Teton with Sitting Bull are at the Mud house on White River

¹ Isaac Cowie *The Company of Adventurers : A Narrative of Seven Years in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company during 1867-1874*. Toronto: William Briggs, 1913: 299.

(Utah), I have learned that they are about 1,000 lodges. I think I will go very soon to trade with these people...

CHAPTER XXXI.

SPRING AND SUMMER, 1873.

THE SPRING RUSH.

WE had a very busy spring in 1873 when our traders, the hunters and the Indians came in. Besides Mr. McKinlay in the office we had in the stores Henry Jordan and George Drever, both of whom had acquired the Indian tongues and been promoted to the grade of storemen in consequence. As interpreters and traders my old friend Peter La Pierre and young Alick McKay were usefully employed also. But the biggest job was my own in making all the settlements and general arrangements with the traders and important customers; also in discussing "affairs of state" and obtaining information bearing upon them from the Metis who thronged the office by day and till late at night, during the spring rush.

After that was over, in the interval before the hunters started for the summer hunt, the office became the rendezvous of leading men among the Metis to make business arrangements and hear and give the news of the day. While one would be in my private room arranging his own affairs, those waiting, after perhaps exhausting other interesting subjects, would begin bragging about the merits of their running ponies, generally ending the dispute in a challenge and a race on the track across the valley in full view of the fort. There were also some great tellers of tall stories about hunting and war among them, and the competition between these was keen, and, to the audience, often comical. On the whole, I think, the one who deserved the palm in pulling the long bow was Bonace Davis, who had truly distinguished himself in battle with the Sioux as well as on the hunting field, but, not

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APPOINTMENTS FOR SWAN RIVER DISTRICT OUTFIT, 1867:

(NOTE.—Those marked (*) are still living.)

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS.

Chief Factor Robert Campbell, Fort Pelly, in charge of district.
Chief Trader William McKay (c), Fort Ellice.

FORT PELLY.

Robert Campbell, chief factor.
*William Thomson Smith, clerk, accountant of district, (now London, Ontario).
*Thomas McKay, postmaster (now of Prince Albert).
William Daniel, district guide and interpreter.

FORT ELLICE.

William McKay (c), chief trader.
*Walter J. S. Traill, apprentice clerk (now Kalispel, Montana).

FORT QU'APPELLE.

*Archibald McDonald, clerk (now retired chief factor near Vancouver).
*Isaac Cowie, apprentice clerk (Winnipeg).
John McNab Ballenden McKay, interpreter.
*William Kennedy, apprentice interpreter (Prince Albert).

TOUCHWOOD HILLS.

Joseph Finlayson, clerk.
Peter La Pierre, interpreter.

EGG LAKE.

*William Edward Traill, apprentice clerk (now a retired chief trader, Meskanaw, Sask.).

SHOAL RIVER.

Adam McBeath, clerk.
*Angus McBeath, postmaster (now a pensioned clerk), Kildonan.

WATERHEN RIVER.

*Alexander Munro, interpreter (now a pensioned clerk, Minitonas).

FAIRFORD.

*Donald McDonald, interpreter (now clerk in charge there).

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fed on the previous day, had heralded our approach when they had sneaked into camp during the night.

Under the tumultuous escort of these bronze-bodied warriors, stripped to the breech-clout and prepared for fight, surrounding us on front, flank and rear, we reached and entered the camp, where an excited crowd of men, women and children greeted us. But the whole camp was in mourning for the loss of sixty of the finest young men, who had been slain by the Blackfeet, two days previously, and its population were living in the midst of alarms. The supply of arms and ammunition, sorely wanted for defence, and that of tea and tobacco, craved for solace in their grief, which we brought, were gladly welcomed; while the puncheon of fire-water, imported by Zenith, was hailed with joyful anticipation of a grand spree to come.

Unfortunately for me, Jerry had been permitted to depart with his carts, all heavily laden, about a week before, and had taken a different route to the wavering one we had followed. However, after we had passed through the outer lines, amidst the seething mob of black-haired, brown-bodied men, women and children, some in gorgeously colored raiment and many divested and dishevelled, I descried the dignified and dandified figure of a gentleman arrayed in the height of the mode prevalent amongst Les Metis Francaise.

The crowd cleared the way for him, and he came up to my horse's side and introduced himself politely as the Company's interpreter from Touchwood Hills. I was well acquainted with him by reputation, especially for that of putting on style, which was an amusing trait of an otherwise sterling character disguised by it. La Pierre laid me under the first of the many friendly obligations which I owe to him and his memory by telling me that Loud Voice wished me to put all my outfit for safe keeping in the Qu'Appelle Crees' "warriors' lodge," and, after that had been done, by inviting me to his

PROUD OF HIS EDUCATION

own comfortable lodge to have a wash (which I sadly needed) and something to eat with him.

Accordingly, my carts were unloaded and the goods put into the tent of the Qu'Appelle Cree warriors to be guarded by them; and, after making them a suitable present in tea and tobacco, I accepted La Pierre's kind invitation.

PETER LA PIERRE.

His father was the French-Canadian postmaster after whom La Pierre's House, on the Porcupine branch of the Yukon River, was named, and who had died before giving his son any schooling. But the lad had ambition to become something above a mere voyageur, and, despite every difficulty and the sneers and ridicule of his fellows, he took every chance to learn, or rather to teach himself, reading and writing in English and arithmetic. Mastering these in a very creditable manner, considering the want of willing helpers, he had risen to the grade of interpreter, and could write an intelligible letter and keep the accounts of his trading business quite well. Of these accomplishments, so unusual at that time amongst his countrymen, in which he had so perseveringly educated himself, he was naturally proud, and this, combined with his love of display, made him the envy of many detractors. He was a brave, well set-up, medium-sized man, who loved the glorious sport of charging after buffalo, in which he informed me that he took even greater delight than "in reading and writing and keeping accounts." In this, he took me much by surprise, for I had never dreamed that "keeping accounts" could be a fascinating delight to any normal being.

He led to a large lodge, highly decorated outside with Indian totems and devices, supposed to represent, in colors, hunting, horse-stealing, and battle scenes. Inside, all around the sides were, similarly decorated in native art, curtains of dressed buffalo skins, and spread on the grass and rushes

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covering the floor were couches of many folds of robes; over which, in his own place, were a number of bright, various-colored and striped blankets, besides many downy pillows covered with brilliant chintz, or turkey red cotton.

Divesting himself of his fine blue cloth, brass-buttoned capote, he ordered a wash basin, scented soap and towel to be set before him. After using these and dressing his long curly hair carefully, he put on a light linen jacket, and ordered the table to be laid. The table was without legs, being merely a board, about four by four feet, hinged in the middle so as to fold up, and nicely painted in different colors, with rays from the centre representing the sun. The handsome wife of Baptiste Bourassa, his second in command, managed the *ménage*, and set before us dainty dishes of luscious buffalo-meat and friend doughnuts, to which I did full justice, and we washed all down with tea and the luxury of sugar. I felt, in my travel-stained flannel shirt and trousers, quite out of place amid such elegant surroundings, but none the less did I enjoy the change from the unpretentious cookery of Whitford and The Ten, and the contrast between the soft couches of the mosquito-free lodge and my lay-out on the journey on mother earth under the tail-end of a cart, with venomous mosquitoes rushing in the moment the smoke of the smudge was wafted to one side. The number of fires and smudges freed that camp from the pestilential mosquitoes, ubiquitous outside.

PEE-WA-KAY-WIN-IN, PEMMICAN PURVEYOR TO THE QUEEN.

We were exchanging information and enjoying a smoke after the repast, when an Indian, who had evidently already visited The Man in the Zenith, and whose hair and paint showed that he was in mourning, came in and began haranguing La Pierre in tones of irritation. La Pierre evidently tried to soothe the savage breast, but did not succeed until he had given Pee-wa-kay-win-in a striped cotton shirt and

Lapierre house (1846) stopping point between fort McPherson and fort Yukon named after Louis Lapierre.



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