

Theodore Brayant *dit* Brien.¹ (1879-1926)

Theodore Brien was born into a buffalo hunting family at Hinsdale, Montana², the son of Alexandre Brien (b. Pembina 1850) and Adelaide St. Denis, married in 1872 at Lebret. Alexandre subsequently married Helene Landry in 1882 on the Milk River. Alexandre and Helene lived principally at Willow Bunch.

Theodore died on December 19, 1926 at Medicine Lake. His sister Marie Alphonsine Brien was born in 1873 at Wood Mountain; brother Alexandre Jr. was born in 1875 on the Milk River; and brother Joseph's place of birth in 1877 is not documented.

One example of an ancestor included in the petitioner's Turtle Mountain data showed the dispersed nature of the migration and settlement patterns of these individuals.

Theodore Brien was born about 1879 in Malta (along the Highline) in Phillips County. His father was Alexander Brien, born in the Turtle Mountain region of North Dakota around 1840. His mother Adelaide St. Denis was born in 1853. Her place of birth was unknown, but may have been in St. Boniface or St. Francis Parishes. The Brien family was intermarried with the Azure and Pelletier families. These three families had connections to the Métis settlements of St. Boniface and St. Francis Parishes in Manitoba, and in Pembina County in North Dakota. In the 1860's and 1870's, members of all three families were documented on Pembina scrip and annuities, and during the 1880's and 1890's were recorded on Turtle Mountain Reservation censuses. The St. Denis family was more closely connected to St. Norbert and St. Boniface than Pembina, but they did trace to a Jerome family which had one member identified as a Pembina Band of Chippewa mixed-blood on annuities in the 1860's.

Theodore Brien's father was listed on the 1850 Pembina County census, but he spent most of his time moving between there and the Turtle Mountain region until the early 1870's when he married his wife at Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan. They had four children between 1873 and 1879, one born in Saskatchewan, two in Montana, and one in an unknown place.

Adelaide Brien died in 1880 in Valley County, Montana. Theodore Brien's father married his second wife Helene Landry, originally from the Turtle Mountain region, in 1880 on the Milk River in Montana. Between 1882 and 1903 they had 11 children. The first four were born (1882-1890) in North Dakota near Turtle Mountain, six of the last seven (1892-1903) in Montana, mainly in Valley or Phillips

¹ Summary taken from "Summary under the Criteria and Evidence for Final Determination Against the 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. October 27, 2009:187-188.

² Between Glasgow and Malta, Montana.

County, while one was born in Saskatchewan. There are many descendants in the modern (Little Shell Band) membership through both wives.

After Theodore Brien was born, his father, grandfather, and their families continued to move back and forth in the region of the Turtle Mountain Reservation and the Milk River in Montana, with excursions into Saskatchewan. Some portions of the extended Brien and Azure families went to the Turtle Mountain region, while some eventually settled in Montana. The descendants of this Brien line in the modern membership come from either Theodore Brien or just two of his half-siblings.

Theodore Brien's family probably spent much of the 1890's roaming around Montana, most likely with periodic stops at the Turtle Mountain Reservation. He married his wife, Rose Houle, on the Crow Reservation in Southern Montana in 1912. She was born in St. Joseph in 1896. The Houle Family was originally connected to the Métis settlement areas at Pembina County and St. Francis Parish, and portions of it were later documented at the Turtle Mountain Reservation.

Between 1912 and 1927, Theodore Brien and his wife had six children. The first was born in North Dakota. The next two were born in 1915 and 1917 on the Crow Reservation in southern Montana. A third was born in 1923 at Wolf Point Reservation in north eastern Montana in Roosevelt County. The fourth was born in 1924 at an unknown location. The final child was born in 1927 in Sweet Grass, Toole County, in north central Montana on the Canadian border, but baptized in Hingham in Cascade County on the edge of the Front Range near Great Falls. One year later, Theodore Brien died in Malta in Phillips County along the Highline. His wife Rose remarried a non-Indian. She had one child in 1936 in Havre in Hill County along the Highline. She died sometime after 1936 in the same place, and has only a few descendants from her second marriage in the modern membership.

The Federal census data from 1900 to 1930 showed that Theodore Brien or his close family members were found in Malta (1900) in Valley County along the Highline, then in Wilder (1910) in Fergus County, then back to Malta (1920), and finally (1930) in Box Elder (1930) in Choteau County, Harlem in Blaine County, and Wolf Point in Roosevelt County, all of which were on the Highline. Most of these settlements were made up of large populations of non-Indians of varying ethnicities. In most cases, the Brien relatives were living among small collections of extended family members, sometimes among small groupings of other people of Métis ancestry. Yet the number and makeup of the Brien family members and relatives, and the Métis living near them, changed dramatically from one census year to the next.



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