

Metis Guides of North West Mounted Police Trek West

Diary of Henry Julien, 1874

July 13th — We halted towards noon at Devil's Creek. The scenery of the vicinity is wild and romantic, and sufficient of itself to suggest the odd name given to the water course. There is doubtless some Indian legend attached to the spot, but no one could tell me anything about it. At night we encamped at the foot of Calf Head Mountain, a round hillock commanding a view of the surrounding prairies. The next day we moved to the eastern branch of the Pembina River, crossed it, and the whole Pembina valley, pulling up and down very steep banks. When we camped some six miles further on we found no water and, to add to our discomfort a furious wind rose upon the prairie and the night was exceedingly cold.

At this point, however, we were cheered by the arrival of our interpreters. They were six in number, the most magnificent specimens of the Métis type I ever laid my eyes on. The smallest of them was over six feet in height and stout in proportion. The chief was Peter Leveille¹, a prairie hero, true to his name. Genthon² was a Hercules, weighing 275 pounds. This man is known all over the prairie country. He was one of Sandford Fleming's guides on his Pacific Railway exploring expedition, and it is related of him that when his horse stuck in the mud, he would raise him up by the tail and propel him forward. Welsh³ was a Scotch Métis, who understood neither English nor his father's Gaelic, but jabbered all the Indian languages, Sioux, Cree, Assiniboine, and weighed 235 pounds, and, though over 70 years of age (sic.), had not a grey hair on his head. Poitras⁴ was nervous and muscular. Morin⁵ was a famous guide, and one of the oldest buffalo

¹ Pierre Léveill  was born on January 14, 1829 at St. Francois Xavier. He was the son of Pierre L veill , born June 1783 at La Bois-St.Paul, Comte Charlevoix, Quebec and Julie McKenzie, the Metis daughter of Alexander McKenzie and his wife Marie. He married Genevieve Fagnant (Faillant) the daughter of Jean Baptiste Fagnant and Joseph Monnet dit Belhumeur on September 15, 1856 at St. Francois Xavier. Pierre II, became a fur trader in the west. He had his own train of Red River carts. He thus became familiar with the routes across the prairies prior to 1873. By all accounts Pierre was an influential Metis of Red River. He temporarily opposed Riel in 1869-70 and kept Riel from obtaining the credentials of Donald A. Smith. He helped negotiate the treaty with the Metis and Saulteaux Indians at the Lake of the Woods in 1873. Pierre was apparently renowned for his size and strength. He was an "influential colonist" of the Red River, according to historian Alexander Begg. At the provisional government's November 16, 1869 Convention of 24, Pierre L veill  was a delegate, chosen to represent St. Francois Xavier.

² Probably one of Maximilian Genthon and Marie Louise Jerome's sons (Joseph, b. 1830; Elie, b. 1834 or Charles b. 1841).

³ Norbert Welsh was born of Metis parents at Red River on the Assiniboine River on August 15, 1845; his mother was a Charlotte Sauv  the daughter of Jean Baptiste Sauv  and Marguerite (Saulteaux). His father was Fran ois Xavier Welsh. Norbert married Cecile Boyer and they moved to Cypress Hills in 1874, Lebert in 1877, and Round Prairie sometime before 1884.³ His wife was the daughter of Louis Boyer and Madeleine Trottier. His wife's grandfather was the famous buffalo hunter Andre Trottier. Norbert and Cecile were married on May 27, 1867 at St. Fran ois Xavier. They had ten children; only five survived past childhood. Norbert Welsh started out hauling freight between Red River and St. Paul for Andrew Bannatyne, a dry goods merchant and fur trader. Subsequently, Welsh began trading to the west on his own account but still obtained all his trade goods from Bannatyne. As a trader and buffalo hunter, Welsh travelled throughout the West and was able to give narratives full of interesting details about frontier customs and the social life of the time. Welsh participated in his first buffalo hunt in 1862. After the demise of the great buffalo herds, he turned to farming, ranching and freighting.

⁴ Pierre Poitras was born on November 11, 1836 at St. Francois Xavier, the son of Pierre Poitras and Marie Bruyer. He was the grandson of Andre Poitras, the founder of St. Francois Xavier. Pierre married Isabelle Bremner, the daughter of William Bremner and Marguerite Allard on February 14, 1860 at St. Francois Xavier. They had eleven children. On January 8, 1870 he was named a member of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. He was a representative to the Convention of Forty representing his home district of St. Francois Xavier. He was also a delegate to the previous Convention of November 16, 1869. He officially seconded the motion of Louis Schmidt to adopt the Manitoba Act.

During the Reign of Terror of Wolseley's troops Pierre was arrested on August 24, 1870 while scouting with Francois Xavier Dauphinais and Francois Xavier Page. He was abused and severely beaten and wounded by the Red River Expeditionary Force. Pierre was found wintering at Wood Mountain NWT in 1873. In 1874, he sold his land at St. Francois Xavier and later applied for Scrip in 1877.

⁵ Jean Baptiste Morin was born on November 21, 1834 at St. Boniface, the son of Antoine Morin (b. 1809) and Therese Larocque.⁵ Baptiste married Nancy Delorme (b. 1841), the daughter of Joseph "Akkway" Delorme⁵ and Isabelle Gourneau on June 16, 1862 at Pembina. Isabelle's father was a counselor to Chiefs Little Shell II and III and her brother "Kar-yence" (Joseph Jr.) in turn was a

hunters in the North-West. Baptiste Page⁶ was a right good fellow and a favourite of mine.

These six men had been sent in our train by Lieutenant-Governor Morris, with six wagonloads of presents - guns, ammunition, calico, cloth, beads and knick-knacks to conciliate the Indian tribes through which we had to pass. They did their work successfully and well, and took a prominent part in our expedition. They proved a most valuable acquisition. They alone were worth in sagacity and endurance any twenty of our own men.



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counselor to Chief Little Shell III. Jean Baptiste and Nancy were a buffalo hunting family. They had four children between 1865 and 1872, born at Red River, St. Joseph, and Wood Mountain. Jean Baptiste was killed by the Sioux at St. Joseph Mountain on July 5, 1875.

⁶ Probably François Xavier Pagé who was born May 30, 1833 at St. François Xavier. He was the son of Joseph Pagé⁶ (b. 1783) and his second wife Agathe Letendré (b. 1790). François-Xavier is the brother of Alexandre Pagé who was also a representative to the Convention of Forty. François Xavier married Philomène Lavallée, daughter of François Lavallée and Joseph Morin. His wife was born 8 November 1843 at Saint-Boniface. The couple had fourteen children. According to the Red River Relief Committee, in 1867 Xavier Pagé had one horse, three oxen and only harvested 40 bushels of wheat, suggesting that he made his living as a tripman for cart brigades. François was one of the representatives of Saint-François-Xavier to the Convention of Forty in January 1870 at the Red River.