

Deschambault (d'Eschambeault), Pierre. (b.1843)

Pierre was born circa 1843, the son of George Fleury Deschambault and Marguerite Loyer or McKenzie. He married Sarah Bruce, the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Bruce and Catherine Perrault on February 29, 1864 at St. Boniface. His father-in-law was a leader for one of the La Loche brigades. The La Loche boat brigades had one of the most demanding jobs in the fur trade. The Methye Portage was the longest portage (20 km) in the fur trade traversing the height of land between the Hudson Bay watershed and the Arctic watershed. It lies between the top of the Churchill River system on the southeast and the Clearwater River, which flows into the Athabasca River on the northwest. Deschambault worked as a translator for the Treaty 8 Métis Scrip Commission. In 1899, this commission travelled on the Athabasca and Peace Rivers in two scows and a York Boat. Pierre Cyr was steersman for the York Boat. Henry McKay was the camp manager and Pierre d'Eschambeault was their interpreter.



Pierre D'Eschambault, interpreter, on left in back row.

Members of the Treaty 8 Scrip Commission at Pelican Portage, Athabasca River, Alberta

Charles Mair writes:¹

Another attraction was my companion, Mr. d'E. himself—a man stout in person, quiet by disposition, and of few words; a man, too, with a lineage which connected him with many of the oldest pioneer families of French Canada. His ancestor, Jacques Alexis d'Eschambault, originally of St. Jean de Montaign, in Poictou, came to New France in the 17th century, where, in 1667, he married Marguerite Rene

¹ Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin: A Narrative of the Athabasca and Peace River Treaty Expedition of 1899*. Calgary: University of Alberta Press, 1999: 35.

Denys, a relative of the devoted Madame de la Peltrie, and thus became brother-in-law to M. de Ramezay, the owner of the famous old mansion in Montreal, now a museum. Jacques d'Eschambault's son married a daughter of Louis Joliet, the discoverer of the Mississippi, and became a prominent merchant in Quebec, distinguishing himself, it is said, by having the largest family ever known in Canada, viz., thirty-two children. Under the new *régime* my companion's grandfather, like many another French Canadian gentleman, entered the British army, but died in Canada, leaving as heir to his seigneurie a young man whose friendship for Lord Selkirk led him to Red River as a companion, where he subsequently entered the Hudson's Bay Company's service, and died, a chief-factor, at St. Boniface, Man. His son, my companion, also entered the service, in 1857, at his father's post of Isle a la Crosse, served seven years at Cumberland, nine at other distant points, and, finally, fifteen years as trader at Reindeer Lake, a far northern post bordering on the Barren Lands, and famous for its breed of dogs. My friend had some strange virtues, or defects, as the ungodly might call them; he had never used tobacco or intoxicants in his life, a marvellous thing considering his environment. He possessed, besides, a fine simplicity which pleased one. Doubled up in the Edmonton hotel with a waggish companion, he was seen, so the latter affirmed, to attempt to blow out the electric light, a thing which, greatly to his discomfiture, was done by his bed-fellow with apparent ease. Being a man of scant speech, I enjoyed with him betimes the luxury of it. But we had much discourse for all that, and I learnt many interesting things from this old trader, who seemed taciturn in our little crowd, but was, in reality, a tower of intelligent silence beat about by a flood of good-humoured chaff and loquacity.



Treaty 8 Scrip Commissioners and staff at Lesser Slave Lake 1899

NAME: DESCHAMBEAULT, Pierre
(DESCHAMBAULT)

PARISH: Native
(born in N. America)

ENTERED SERVICE: 1857

DATES:

Appointments & Service Outfit Year*	Position	Post	District	HBCA Reference
1857-1860	Apprentice Postmaster	Cumberland House	Cumberland	B.239/k/2 p. 145, 165, 186
1860-1862	Postmaster	Cedar Lake	Cumberland	B.239/k/2 p. 206; B.239/k/3 p. 227
1862-1864	Clerk	Cumberland House	Cumberland	B.239/k/3 p. 247, 269
1864-1865	Clerk	disposable	Swan River	B.239/k/3 p. 292
1865-1866	Clerk in charge	Egg Lake	Swan River	B.239/k/3 p. 314
1866-1867	Clerk	Big Point	Swan River	B.239/k/3 p. 335
1867-1874	Clerk	Ile-a-la-Crosse	English River	B.239/k/3 p. 352, 377, 407, 433
1874-1878	Clerk in charge	Lac du Brochet	Cumberland	B.235/k/1 fo. 4, 13d, 22d, 33d, 103d; D.38/1 fo. 46d
1878-1885	Junior Chief Trader	Lac du Brochet	Cumberland	B.235/k/1 fo. 42d, 58, 71, 83, 93



Filename: Descambeault, Pierre (fl. 1857-1885) JHB/jhb/Nov. 1990; June/99/mhd



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