

Thomas Major(e). (1909-1978)

By Lawrence Barkwell and Del Majore¹

Thomas was the son of Alfred Joseph Majore (b. 1881) and Marie Julie Desjarlais (b. 1873). He married Agnes Pelletier (b. 1909), the daughter of Joseph Pelletier (b. 1885) and Justine Desmarias (b. 1890).



Tom Major of Lebret was one of the earliest members of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan - first known as "The Halfbreeds of Saskatchewan." This organization was formed in 1931-32 by Metis in Regina and the immediate area northeast of Regina; namely, Lebret, Qu'Appelle and Lestock. The Halfbreed Organization, as it was called up to 1933, was just for Metis. This then became the Metis Society of Saskatchewan and Thomas was president in 1940.



¹ Del Majore is Thomas Majore's grandson. Del presented to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples on May 10, 1993, on issues of concern to Metis youth. His presentation is cited twice in their report. (*Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 4, Perspectives and Realities*, Ottawa: 1996: 236.)

Thomas was the great great grandson of Roderick Ross², whose daughter Philomene (his great grandmother) was married to Pierre Pelletier of Lebret. Roderick Ross (b. 1829) was a St. Francois Xavier trader, the son of Hugh Ross and Sarah Short. He married Marie Delorme the daughter of Urbain Delorme and Madeleine Vivier. In 1878, Roderick and other Metis buffalo hunters at Cypress Hills wrote a petition asking for a special Metis reserve of land. Their daughter Rose was married to Gregoire Wills (Welsh). Wills (Welsh) also signed the petition for a reserve. He later became a resident at Lebret near the Catholic Mission.³

In the dirty thirties Tom joined the “Union of the Unemployed.” A number of them also joined the Communist Party of Canada. The *Regina Leader-Post* described Tom as the barefoot boy who was going to lead the Metis people into another rebellion. Tom enlisted as a Private in South Saskatchewan Regiment; he served in Canada but after eight months was discharged as Category E, not meeting the physical standards. It is noteworthy that while away from home on service the RCMP searched his home because of his political activities.

Martin Knutson, J.Z. La Rocque, and two MacKenzies started organizing the Metis in the city of Regina in 1931. They were trying to follow up on Metis lands and what happened with Metis scrip. Solomon Pritchard, from Baljennie was helping them then the McGillises and Beaudrys at Willowbunch got involved along with the St. Denis family of Prince Albert.

Subsequently, the Saskatchewan Metis Society was formed in November 1937 to forward the Metis constitutional claims regarding the dispossessed Metis of Saskatchewan. The first provincial board was: Bill Larocque, Bob LaRocque, J.Z. LaRocque, Jerry LaRocque, Martin Knudston, Ed Klyne, Joe McKenzie, Jack Blondeau and Joe Ross. In the 1940s, a number of townships of public land were set aside for the Metis by the Canadian Department of the Interior. This was a temporary relief effort, the Metis held

² Roderick’s brother, Daniel Donald Ross (1822-1885) was a buffalo hunter. Donald Ross was a member of the Jean Baptiste Falcon hunting party out of St. Francois Xavier that was involved in the famous Metis/Dakota Battle of the Grand Coteau in 1851. He married Catherine Delorme (b. 1825) and they moved to a claim south of Tourond’s Coulee. Ross was a member of Riel’s Exovedate and Council in the 1885 Resistance. He was one of the leaders of the men who rescued those who were trapped during the fighting at Tourond’s Coulee. He was killed on May 12, 1885, the last day of fighting at Batoche.

³ Roderick Ross and Marie Delorme had the following children:

- Marie Andronique, b. 1850, married Louis Marion.
- Isabelle, b. 1852, died 1856.
- Madeleine, b. 1854, married Antoine Faillant dit Lafontaine.
- Sarah, b. 1856.
- Rose, b. 1857, married Gregoire A. Wills (Welsh) then married Alexandre Peletier.
- Pierre, b. 1859, married Betsy Welsh.
- Philomene, b. 1860, married Pierre Pelletier.
- Roderick, b. 1862.
- Urbain, b. 1865.
- Florestine, b. 1867, married Michel Thibault.
- Elzear, b. 1869, married Elizabeth Pelletier.

the land under a 99-year lease. After 1940, Joe Ross became the president and Joseph La Rocque (J.Z. La Rocque) became the vice-president. In 1941 they had a membership of 2800.



Back, L - R: Marie Major, Grandmother Rosalie, Grandmother Theresa Martin, Melanie Major. Front: Joe Donaldson and Fred Major.

Family Scrip:

Major, Alfred; address: LeBret; born: 14 June, 1881 at LeBret; father: Joseph Major (Whiteman); mother: Marie St. Denis (Métis); scrip cert.: form E, no. 368; claim no. 487.

Pelletier, Pierre; heir to his deceased children; Joseph Norman, born: 1881 at LeBret; died: 9 July, 1888; William John, born: 1883 at LeBret; died: 25 March, 1886; address: File Hills; father: Pierre Pelletier (Métis and deponent); mother: Philoméne Ross (Métis); scrip cert.: form F, no. 1861, Joseph Norman; scrip cert.: form D, no. 328, William John; claim no. 707.

Scrip affidavit for Desjarlais, Michel; born: July 1819; father: Antoine Desjarlais (Métis); mother: Catherine Allary (Métis); claim no.: 3117; scrip no.: 12741; date of issue: June 1, 1882; amount: \$160.



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