

Captain Francis Michael Dease. (1786-1865)

Dease was a Captain fighting on the British side during the War of 1812. Francis was the third son of Dr. John Dease and Jane French. Francis Dease was born on the 10th of August 1786 at Niagara He died at St. Boniface in 1865.

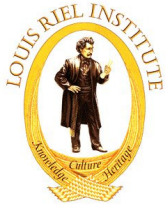
Dease was rather above the common size, with dark hair, and was fond of children. Captain Dease shared in the capture of Prairie du Chien in 1814. He appears at this period to have filled the double position of sub-Indian agent under Col. Dickson, and captain of the militia of Prairie du Chien. His life was mostly devoted to the Indian trade, and he was engaged in both the North West Fur Company, and the Hudson's Bay Company service. He was never married, and died on Red River, now Manitoba, Aug. 15, 1865, at the age of seventy-nine years. He commanded the Ojibwa (Chippewa) at Michilimackinac when it was captured by William McKay. He was also involved in the attack on Prairie du Chien in 1814.

During the War of 1812 the Prairie du Chien Militia was organized was organized under the command of Captain Francis Michael Dease. These men were to protect the village from hostile Indians in search of food and were to resist the American forces that Britain anticipated would come up the Mississippi River from St. Louis.

William McKay, a trader, was commissioned a Lieutenant Colonel and authorized to form and lead a military expedition to Prairie du Chien. Three prominent traders, Joseph Rolette, Thomas Anderson, and Pierre Grignon, were commissioned captains of companies of volunteers to be drawn from the ranks of voyageurs. One British regular was attached to the force. Sergeant James Keating, of the Royal Artillery, was to man the brass three-pound field cannon allocated to the expedition. A small company of Michigan Fencibles was placed under McKay's authority. Robert Dickson, British Indian Agent, attached part of his Indian force to the expedition consisting of three bands of Dakota and about one hundred Winnebago with a few Mesquakie. To keep the Indians under control, officers of the Indian Department, including Michael Brisbois, Jr., of Prairie du Chien, accompanied the group. At Green Bay, Menominee and Ojibwa joined. By the time they reached the Mississippi river just below Prairie du Chien McKay estimated his force at 650 men.

The force arrived in Prairie du Chien on Sunday July 17, 1814. Positioning the companies around the prairie, about noon, terms of surrender were presented to Lieutenant Joseph Perkins, commander of United States troops in the fort. Upon refusal, fighting commenced with an attack on the gunboat. By late in the day, the Governor Clark was forced to cut her lines because of the accuracy of the three-pound gun. Drifting away from Prairie du Chien, Fort Shelby was left without provisions and ammunition. The battle desultorily continued for two or more days with the Indians growing restless and McKay positioning his troops closer to the fort. Finally the British-Canadians decided to end the stalemate and began to prepare hot shot for the three-pounder to set the wooden fort afire. Confronted with diminishing ammunition, no provisions, a lack of water, and potential fire, the Americans presented a flag of truce. Terms of surrender

were negotiated. The morning of July 20, Lt. Perkins and the troops marched out of the fort and laid down their arms. The men were paroled and arrangements were made to send the Americans back to St. Louis. It had been a bloodless affair but secured British control of the entire upper Mississippi valley. To insure the territory remained British, a fort was to be maintained in Prairie du Chien. Fort Shelby was invested with British forces from Mackinac and renamed Fort McKay.



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