

Daniel E. Ma-To-Na-Pa "Bear Paw" Mitchell. (1864 -1940)

By Margaret Robinson and Lawrence Barkwell

Margaret Robinson writes:

My mother, Rose Mary Mitchell (enrolled at Ft. Peck) passed away in 2008 and I began working on our family history when she was ill. She loved our Native family history and it was always well known that Col. David Dawson Mitchell was in our lineage. However, I didn't know the Métis factor in our family history until I started doing the research. I am so thankful that the Métis family lines were saved through scrip documents. I am of mixed descent and when I learned about the Métis I felt a real connection. My mother was Assiniboine, Cree (as I now know) and Paiute (on her maternal side). She married an Irishman, my father Paul Clark, so I have always had that dual heritage. I am thankful to have the opportunity to share our family history and in particular, my great grandfather, Daniel "Dan" Mitchell.

I discovered the Cree lineage both from Dan's maternal and paternal sides. Dan's mother, Isabelle St. Germain, was listed as a mixed Cree Indian in an 1886 Indian census document as well as other places. She spoke French fluently. His grandfather, Col. David Dawson Mitchell, "married" a woman named Marie Deschamps, also mixed Cree. Her mother was a full blood Cree woman known as "Mother Deschamps" (she was married to the infamous François Deschamps).



Mother Deschamps, Cree (right) by Karl Bodmer. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia File: Woman of the Snake tribe and woman of the Cree tribe.

Dan Mitchell lived in Fort Peck most of his life and I uncovered a lot of interesting history about his life. Before moving to Fort Peck, Dan lived with his family on the plains of Manitoba. Dan hunted buffalo just like his father and traded for their living. A fellow scout describes Dan: "He was like all the other breeds at that time and was running buffaloes, he was living with his father at that time, David Mitchell." His father, David aka "Bloody Knife," described his occupation in a scrip document as a plains hunter. Another friend says he knew Dan from their childhood in St. Francois, Manitoba.

When Dan was 21 years old, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as a scout and interpreter. I discovered through Canadian archives that there was a long battle between Dan and the Canadian government over whether he served as a scout and interpreter in the RCMP towards the end of the Louis Riel movement. The Canadian government compensated soldiers and scouts that served during the uprising with either money or land [Bounty Scrip]. Dan, like many of his fellow scouts, sought compensation. The government claimed he never served, and Dan claimed he did. The correspondence itself was pretty interesting and reflected how the government thought of Métis people. For example, in a report written by J. P. Cameron (RCMP), he writes, "...there is a chance that Mitchell, who appears to be above the mental standard of the other breeds, may have been deceptive in having these breeds give false statements." I also wondered whether my great grandfather had a conflict with serving and patrolling the boundary line among his own people. In the end, the government did not recognize his service despite the multiple witnesses and documentation he provided.

Daniel "Bear Paw" Mitchell was born on February 28, 1864 at Winnipeg, Manitoba. Dan was the son of David Joseph "Bloody Knife" Mitchell (b. May 1841, Missouri, died circa 1900) and Isabelle St. Germain. They married on August 18, 1862 in St. Francois Xavier, Manitoba. Isabelle was the daughter of François St. Germain (b. 1781) and Louise Saucier *dit* Chateau. Isabelle St. Germain was born on June 14, 1841 in St. François Xavier, and died on April 3, 1929 in Roosevelt County, Montana. Isabelle was first married to Francois LaFrenière in 1859. She then married David Joseph Mitchell, the son of David Dawson Mitchell and Marie Deschamps on August 18, 1862 at St. François Xavier. Subsequently, she married Robert Burton on February 22, 1903 at Wolf Point, Montana.

Daniel Mitchell enlisted in the North-West Mounted Police on April 1, 1885. He then enlisted in the US Army on June 18, 1894. After his Canadian service, Dan had moved to the Fort Peck area and married an Assiniboine woman, Lula Garfield. He became a U.S. citizen and member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine/Sioux Tribe. Dan Mitchell carried himself as an Assiniboine and was enrolled at Fort Peck, but I only see the Métis/Cree lineage. I'm not sure if he was adopted in the tribe by marriage to his Assiniboine wife – or perhaps the Cree lineage was closely related to the Assiniboine Cree speakers' band which he claimed to be associated with.

Dan Mitchell's first marriage was to Louisa or Lula Wa ya wa wi yan Garfield in 1888 in Wolf Point, Montana. He then married Winona Koon Winn Mitchell on April 8, 1913 in Poplar, Montana, Roosevelt County. He married Mary or Elizabeth Dauphine on October 4, 1923 in Poplar, Roosevelt County, Montana.



This photo circa 1910 was provided by Margaret Robinson¹. Dan Mitchell (on left), is shown with his mother, Isabelle St. Germain Burton (centre), and his sister Sarah Mitchell Courchene (right) holding baby Rosemary Courchene.

Dan and his family settled comfortably into the Fort Peck area and he served in the U.S. Army as a private in a company of Indian scouts in the Dakota territories during 1894. We were told he served as a scout for General Miles while in the U.S. Army. He later served as chief of the Fort Peck Indian police and agency interpreter on the reservation.

Dan's father and wife, Dave and Isabelle Mitchell, also flourished in the Fort Peck area providing a good life for themselves cattle ranching.

The following is an Excerpt from *Treasured Years* Roosevelt County:

¹ Margaret Robinson notes: "His mother, Isabelle St. Germain is Métis, shown in the black mourning dress. She was born in 1841 at St. François Xavier, Manitoba. She was married to Dan's father, Dave Mitchell "Bloody Knife". Dave Mitchell was the son of well-known American Col. David Dawson Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis. Col. Mitchell had a few "country" wives and fathered children while in the fur trade. Our line comes from the Deschamps family of Manitoba, Canada. Col. Mitchell "married" Marie Deschamps, the daughter of the infamous Francois Deschamps who killed Canadian governor Robert Semple in the Red River massacre of 1816. Deschamps fled to the Missouri and was in the fur trade where he met Col. Mitchell at Fort Union.

Another early rancher was Dave Mitchell. He was part Indian and his wife was French Indian. Mr. Mitchell was a trapper, hunter and Indian trader all of his life. Early in the fall, Mr. Mitchell would load his sleds with food and other provisions, take his dog teams and start for the north country, trapping and bartering with the Indians. When spring came he would load his sleds with fur pelts and start home. During these expeditions he usually acquired a few head of horses. These he would drive home, turn out to graze until sleek and fat. Then he would start on a trading expedition to Canada. In time he started trading horses for cattle which he drove home to the Fort Peck Reservation. In the early 1880s, Mitchell began his cattle ranching operation in earnest. The Mitchell ranch was built up about two miles east of Wolf Point on the bank of Little Wolf Creek. He used the brand "DM" on the left side. Much credit is due him for the effort he made to interest the Indian people in ranching.

In 1908, James Garfield, the Chairman of the Assiniboines at Fort Peck, was accompanied by Dan Mitchell, the Agency Interpreter, on a trip to Washington D.C. The purpose of this visit was to consult with the Indian Department about a Senate Bill that would allot 70 acres of irrigable land and 200 acres of grazing land to the people of the Fort Peck Reservation and a large number of the Band's Michif adoptees that were to be covered by this arrangement. On April 6, 1908 they were informed that the Bill had passed in Congress giving each Indian at Fort Peck 320 acres.²



² Kenneth Shields Jr. et al. *History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation Montana 1800-2000*. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press: 2008: 196-197.

Walter Clark and Dan Mitchell, Delegation to Washington D.C. April 1908 (photograph courtesy book *History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation Montana 1800-2000* by Kenneth Shields Jr. et al. Montana Historical Society Press: 2008.)

Sadly, during the winter of 1908, Dan's wife Lula became ill and died. She was only 34 years old and died of a lung-related ailment leaving behind seven children: Alvina, Fred, Ursula, Theodore, Mary, Lucy and adopted son Daniel Mitchell, Jr. A family story is told that it was Christmas time and the children were waiting for her to come for Christmas, but she never came home. She was in a sanitarium for TB but never recovered. The children were sent out to relatives and government boarding schools after her death. My grandfather, Fred Mitchell, was sent to the Fort Shaw Boarding school. Dan remarried and was widowed twice more. He died June 18, 1940 at the age of 76.

My mother would have been very surprised to discover all the history revealed during this research. She shared my love for genealogy and always encouraged me. She passed before I was able to share the bulk of this research. However, I have been able to share our newfound Métis history with my family and I have met many new relatives as well.



*Lula Garfield Mitchell, Dan's wife, holding baby Ursula Mitchell.
Photo courtesy of Margaret Robinson*



*Photo Courtesy of Margaret Robinson
Dan & his children: L-R back row Ursula (Brophy), Fred (my grandfather), Lucy. Front row L-R Mary
(Verdon), Theodore, Dan and Alvina (Hawley)*



*Portrait (Front) of Mato-Nape or Ma-To-Na-Pa (Bear Paw), called Daniel Mitchell, January 19, 1905.
Photo Lot 60: Bae Ref Album 5: Siouan 02896600, National Anthropological Archives,
Smithsonian Institution*

Obituary of Daniel Mitchell

Daniel Mitchell, one of General Miles' Scouts, dies suddenly after lingering illness. Daniel Mitchell, 76, passed away at the Atkinson Memorial Hospital here early Tuesday morning after an illness of several months. Advanced age was the cause of his death. Mr. Mitchell was one of the few remaining old Indian scouts in the northwest and one of the few that could boast of the fact that he served as a scout both in the United States army and in the royal mounted police of Canada. He serviced as a private in a company of Indian scouts in the U.S. army in the Dakota territories during 1894, being given an

honorable discharge in November of the same year. After his discharge from the U.S. army he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, serving as a scout and interpreter, with Captain MacDonnell, at Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan, Canada. [Editors: Actually, Daniel Mitchell enlisted in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on April 1, 1885. He then enlisted in the US Army on June 18, 1894.] His Indian name was Bear Paw. After being discharged from the U.S. Army, he came to the Fort Peck Indian reservation where he was chief of the Fort Peck Indian Police for a number of years. He later became an interpreter on the reservation. Mr. Mitchell retired from the Indian service in 1936 with petition. He was an honorary member of the American Legion. "Dan" will be greatly missed by both his Indian and white friends as he has been a familiar and well know figure on the Fort Peck reservation for many years. Daniel Mitchell was born February 28, 1864, at Winnipeg, Canada, to the parents of David and Isabelle Mitchell. His grandfather was a high ranking officer in the United States army. In 1888 he was united in marriage to Lula Garfield at Wolf Point. To this union, eight children were born. Those surviving are Mrs. Alex Verdon of Poplar, Mrs. Vina Hawley of Spokane, Washington, Freddie Mitchell of Bapchule, Arizona, Mrs. Ursula Brophy of Hines Oregon and Teddie Mitchell of Poplar.*

*Obituary said he was born in Winnipeg, but the book "The Assiniboines" said he was born in White Earth, ND.



Daniel "Bear Paw" Mitchell, Old Time Indian Scout
Photo courtesy of Margaret Robinson



Daniel E. “Ma-to-na-pa” (Bear Paw) Mitchell (1864-1940), the son of Isabelle St. Germaine (b. 1841) and David Joseph “Bloody Knife” Mitchell (1841-1900) of St. Francois Xavier. Photo courtesy of Margaret Robinson.

Métis Scrip claims

Mitchell, Isabella; for her deceased daughter, Floréistine Mitchell; address: Wolf Point, Montana; born: 1876 at St. Francois Xavier, Montana; died: 1889 at Wolf Point; father: Joseph (Dave) Mitchell (Métis); mother: Isabella St. Germain (Métis and deponent); heirs: Daniel Mitchell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 802 for \$34.28; Isabella Mitchell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 804 for \$34.28; Marie Rose Mitchell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 806 for \$34.28; Hyacinthe Mitchell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 808 for \$34.29; Nancy Mitchell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 810 for \$34.29; Sarah Mitchell, scrip cert.: form D, no. 812 for \$34.29; Marie Louise Chase, scrip cert.: form D, no. 814 for \$34.29; claim no. 20.

Scrip affidavit for Daniels, Isabella; wife of Wm. Daniels; born: 1858; father: Colonel Mitchell (American); mother: Nancy Deschamps (Métis); claim no.: 2933; date of issue: May 28, 1879

Mitchell, Isabella; for her deceased daughter, Josephine Mitchell; address: Wolf Point, Montana; born: 6 October, 1878 at Cypress Hills; died: Fall, 1899 at Fort Shaw, Montana; father: Joseph Mitchell (Métis); mother: Isabella St. Germain (Métis and deponent); scrip issued to Daniel Mitchell, a brother of deceased, for 240 acres; claim no. 21.

Mitchell, Isabella; for her daughter, Marie Louise Mitchell; wife of John K. Chase; address: Wolf Point, Montana; born: 1872 near Cypress Hills, Assiniboine; father: Joseph Mitchell (Métis, deceased); mother: Isabella St. Germain (Métis and deponent); scrip cert.: form E, no. 165; file ref. 130805A; claim no. 19.



Compiled and edited by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute