

## Hivernant Métis Families, Brigades and Settlements in the Cypress Hills

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Métis buffalo hunters photographed on the Milk River Plains by the British North American Boundary Commission, July 18th, 1874. Image made available by the Boissevain Archives.

### **Abstract**

In 1969 the remains of two cabins were excavated in a late 19th century winter settlement at Head-of-the-Mountain (known as the Kajewski Site), southwest of Elkwater Lake in the Cypress Hills in Alberta, Canada, which had been occupied by *hivernant* Métis commercial buffalo hunters. Archival research to identify the occupants revealed an 1878 petition to the North West Territorial government listing 277 Cypress Hills Métis petitioners, addressing issues such as land for a reserve, farming assistance, and game laws concerning buffalo hunting. The purpose of this essay is an attempt to identify the extended families, hunting brigades and settlement pattern of the Métis people named in the petition.

### **Acknowledgements**

In particular, I want to thank Alise Herodes, a descendant of the Berger family, who provided copies of original census information and correspondence from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. describing the original Métis families who settled in the Judith Basin of central Montana in 1879. The essay also owes much to the research of Lawrence Barkwell, Martha Harroun Foster, Michel Hogue, Brenda Madougall & Nicole St-Onge, Gail Morin, Ron Rivard & Catherine Littlejohn, and the assistance of Darren Prefontaine and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. Some names listed in the original handwritten 1878 Cypress Hills Petition may have varied in translation from those listed in the Sessional Papers. Comparative variations were also found with many of the names listed in other sources I reviewed. I accept full responsibility for the identification of individual names used in the essay.

## Introduction

During 1969-71 archaeological research in the Cypress Hills, in Alberta, Canada, the writer came across an 1878 petition to the North West Territorial government listing 277 Cypress Hills Métis petitioners, concerning issues such as land for a reserve, farming assistance, and game laws concerning buffalo hunting. The petition was ultimately referred to the Canadian Parliament. Canada's deputy minister of the interior, Lt. Colonel John Dennis, later characterized the petitioners as:

*"... differ[ing] but little, except in name, from the Indians."* (in: Hogue 2015:125).

This essay attempts to identify the extended families, hunting brigades and settlement pattern of the nomadic Métis people named in the petition, who commercially hunted buffalo and overwintered in the Milk River Plains region, the last great reservoir for buffalo on the North American plains.

## Discussion Concerning The Petition

In considering the Cypress Hills Métis, Martha Harroon Foster in We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community describes the society of the Milk River Plains Métis as organized into nomadic bands based on extended family kinship, a process that began early in the 18th century:

*"... particularly numerous were semipermanent hamlets that developed as small trading outposts. Usually the residence of an extended family group, including a trader and related engages ... spouses, and children, these small villages were located close to Native kin who provided furs and supplies. This band-type residential organization was prevalent in the Great Lakes region, becoming an important aspect of Métis society in the West, including*

*Montana. Band organization functioned as the chief source of [these] fur trade families' structured mobility.... Much like Native band organization, this kinship group was an efficient economic and social unit that survived geographic change.*

*"The Crees, Ojibwas, and other bands with whom they rapidly became connected by marriage, trade and mutual defense accepted them as family members and trade partners, calling them 'O-tee-paym-soo-wuk' (their-own-boss)." (2006:18, 22).*

Thus, many Plains Métis traveled west with Ojibwa and Cree tribal bands with which they already had marriage ties and families, migrating west from the Great Lakes, aggressively pursuing new territory and trading opportunities. Some were families from which British and American company traders engaged voyageurs for service. Upon completion of their service, many remained in the west as freemen, often working and living with their families in proximity to their former posts. For example, Harroun Foster describes:

*"Many of the Metis participating in the early Missouri trade settled permanently on the river, some becoming closely associated with the Missouri River tribes. Others moved north to the Red River, taking part in the establishment of the earliest communities in that area. Pre-1804 Missouri fur trade records note several family names that occur repeatedly on the upper Missouri and eventually reappear among the Spring Creek Band. Pierre Berger, for example, accompanied Missouri Company trader Jean Baptiste Truteau up the Missouri River in 1794. Apparently Berger had been in the area for some time because he spoke a Missouri River language (Ponca).... he acted as a trader for Truteau and was second in command.... elsewhere Truteau wrote that his employees were 'Canadian' or 'Creole'[i.e. Métis ....]" (ibid: 24-25).*

Many surnames listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills petition can be found in the index and descriptive footnotes of the Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry [the younger], Fur Trader of the Northwest Company, and of David Thompson , Official Geographer and Explorer of the same Company 1799-1814 (edited by Elliott Coues 1897). The men worked as *engagé* voyageurs in company fur trade districts and posts at the beginning of the 19th century across northwestern North America. Some examples are:

*“One Berger of the N.W. Co. was at the Rocky Mt. house in Nov. 1806 — Joseph Berger appears as voyageur N.W. Co., Fort Dauphin, 1804. (ibid: 594 footnote).*

*“Name [Bottineau] reappearing in MS, and print as Battineau, Battimeau, and Bottureau. Charles is listed as a voyageur N.W.Co., Lower Red r., 1804, and we shall find him with Henry to 1808. (ibid: 226 footnote).*

*“Again, McDonnell’s Journal of Dec. 10th, 1793 ... indicates a still earlier visit to the Mandans, as follows: ‘The nine men equipt (on their own account) for the Missouri, started, viz: Raphael Faignan.... (ibid: 302 footnote).*

*“Fainiant, Jean Baptiste, N.W.Co., Kam., 1804. (ibid: 946 index).*

*“The man is probably Charles Fontaine, listed as a voyageur N.W.Co., Fort des Prairies, 1804. — Antoine Fontaine appears as a voyageur contre-maitre N.W.Co., Upper Red r., 1804 — One Lafontaine, as voyageur there and then. — Joseph Lafontaine, as the same, Nepigon, 1804. (ibid: 573 footnote).*

*“B. ‘Gardeipied’ is no doubt the overland Astorian who figures as a hunter by the name Gardpie; the usual form of the name is, and has long been, Gariépy. Louis Gariépy is listed*

*as a voyageur N.W.Co., Upper Red r., 1804. Francois Gardpie is named ... as at the Spokane House under J. Clarke, 1812. (ibid: 872 footnote).*

*“Name in question, whether Laverdure, Laventure, or Lacouture, all of which occur in N.W.Co. annals about this time [1802-03]. — One Laverdure was in Athabaska, 1788-89. — Louis L’Aventure is listed in 1804, Fort Dauphin. — Paul Laventure is listed in 1804, Fond du Lac. — One La Couture was on Mouse r. in 1794. — Francois Lacouture is listed in 1804, Upper Red r. (ibid: 212 footnote).*

*“In that year [1798] they both [N.W.Co., X.Y.Co.] also had posts at the mouth of the [Qu’Appelle] river; the N.W.Co. being in charge of André Poitras, clerk N.W.Co., winter 1804-05; probably the same as one Poitra or Poitras who wintered at Fort Espérance, 1793-94. (ibid: 301 footnote).*

*“The name of this freeman [Pelletier] reappears as Antoine Peltier, witness in the Semple case in Toronto, Oct., 1818; very likely the same person as one Peltier of the N.W.Co., at Pine Fort, on the Assiniboine, Oct., 1793. — Jean Baptiste Pelletier and Louis Pelletier were voyageurs N.W.Co., Nepigon, 1804. (ibid: 268 footnote).*

*“Ouelette, — express with Fournier, Slave l. to Fort Chipewyan, Apr. 17th, 1800.” (ibid: 992 index).*

Charles Larpenteur, a Fort Union clerk, writing in Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri described Métis trapping, trading and working at the fort in the Upper Missouri region in 1830, and frequenting the Milk River by 1835. As such, he described a Berger family member at the fort as:

“... an old trapper named [Jacques?] Berger, who had been in his young days in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, at the Fort of the Prairie [Fort Edmonton] ... and this having been a post for the Blackfeet, he had acquired the language and could speak it fluently.” (1933:75-76, 92-93)

Larpenteur also described one (or more) Gardepie family members at the fort. Baptiste Gardepie became embroiled in a violent family feud with the Deschamps family who attempted to murder Baptiste, an event which finally involved the fort staff and ended with the deaths of all the Deschamps at the fort (*ibid*: 72-75). Later, Larpenteur described the death of “old man” Gardepie in a fight with Sioux horse thieves (*ibid*: 184-185), as Gardepie attempted to recover the stolen horses.

Fort Union had been built for the American Fur Company near the junction of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers a few years earlier by a former North West Company trader, Kenneth McKenzie. Working as McKenzie’s interpreter in 1830, the same Berger was instrumental in convincing the aggressive Blackfoot to trade at Fort Union. Going forward to 1848, Jacques Berger solicited letters of reference citing both his good character and his history as an upper Missouri trader in the years since 1830, to renew a trading license from McKenzie and the American Fur Co. (Correspondence 1848).

Thus, Métis families like the Bergers and Gardepies (Gariépys) were using the Milk River Plains (and possibly the Cypress Hills) as a hunting ground early in the 19th century, likely regarding it as “their” territory. They were advantaged by their earlier family experiences and tribal contacts gained as *engagés* working in the region. More specifically, Michel Hogue in

Metis And The Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People, identifies Azures, Bergers, Laverdures, Klines and Fayants as:

*“... the stable core of families [that] had remained rooted in the region.”* (2015: 135).

Geographically, the Milk River Plains (see Figure), comprise a broad drainage basin bounded by the Rocky Mountain foothills to the west; the highland areas of the Milk River Ridge, Cypress Hills and Wood Mountain to the north; Fort Union and the Missouri Coteau to the east; and the upper Missouri River to the south. The Canada-USA international border bisects the region east to west.

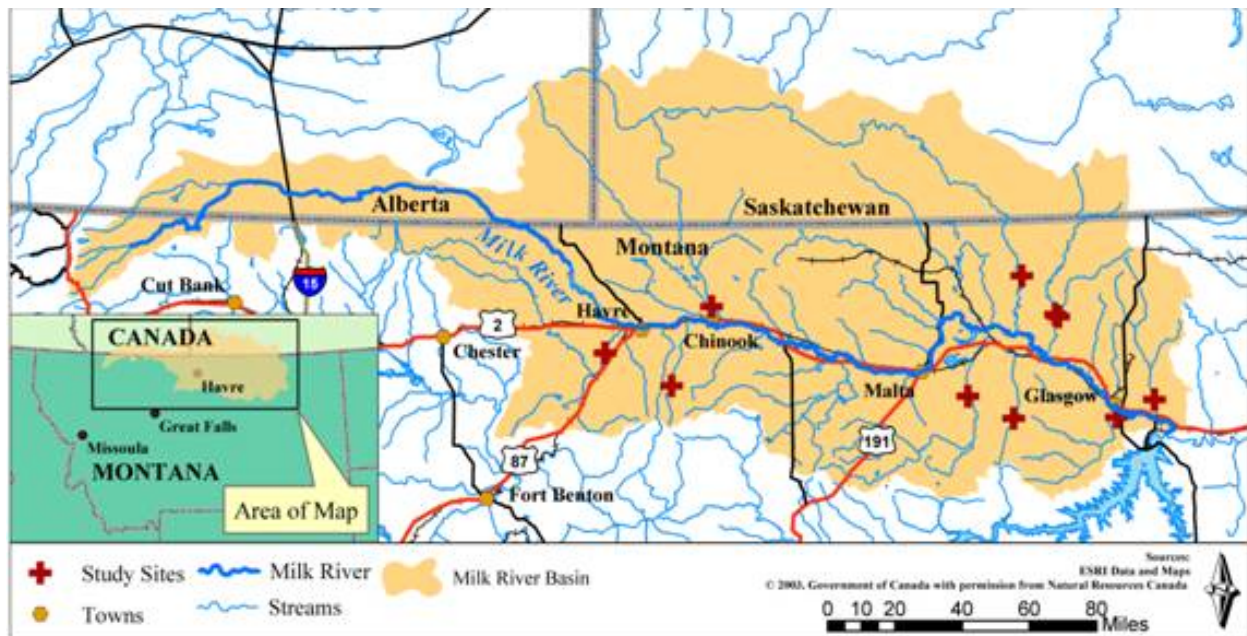


Figure (from Lhotak 2004: Fig.1)

Although recognized much earlier by both countries, the international border was finally formalized by the Canada-USA Joint International Boundary Commission survey and the presence of the North West Mounted Police and US Army, which enabled the control of



travel across the “medicine line” after 1874. This effort at control, of course, was ignored by the nomadic brigades of Métis *hivernants* (overwinterers) roaming the landscape on both sides of the border, trapping the rivers for beaver pelts and hunting the herds of buffalo for robes and meat, and by many of the American traders and merchants on the upper Missouri River who serviced the region.

Approximately two thirds of people listed in the 1850 Pembina Census (Morin 1998) originated in the Red River Colony, the rest originated in Pembina and other US locations. For example, Jacques Berger’s son Pierre (sr.) was born in 1816 in the Red River Colony while his wife Judith Wilkie was born in 1813 in Pembina, their children were born in both the Red River Colony and Pembina, and the family was living in Pembina by 1850 (Morin, 1998). When compared to the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition, listed in previous work by the writer (Elliott 1971:123-126, Table 7), 162 of 277 persons in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition had family surnames identical or similar those in the 1850 Pembina Census.

Considering that the Cypress Hills Petition was signed in the summer, mostly by male hunters, it is reasonable to suggest the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition represents only a fraction of Métis residing in the Hills at the time. Many others were likely out on the Milk River Plains with their families hunting for buffalo that summer. The writer can personally identify five Métis settlements in the Cypress Hills in the latter 19th century: (1) Chimney Coulee at the east end of the Hills,

(2) Ft. Walsh Townsite (principally inhabited by Métis), (3) Four Mile Coulee, (4) “several shacks and small cabins” removed during construction of Hwy. #41 above Beaver Creek at the east end of Elkwater Lake (Art Peters 1969 personal communication), and (5) Head-of-the-Mountain at the west end of the Hills.

Regarding Métis families from the British North West, Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge describe the Trottier hunting brigade in their article Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo-Hunting Brigades simply as:

*“... a community of people from the White Horse Plains in Red River who began engaging in the hunt as a cohesive group in the 1830s.... Tied to the Trottier brigade via marriage were the Dumont, Ouellette, Wilkie, Gariepy and Berger brigades.”* (2013:24-25).

In effect, the authors describe a Métis extended family organized into a nomadic hunting brigade. Although the Trottier family first organized themselves for commercial hunting at White Horse Plains, 3 Trottier family members (André, Joseph and Marguerite) are listed in the 1850 Pembina Census (Morin 1998) as born in Pembina during the late 18th century. Mary Weekes (1994) notes in The Last Buffalo Hunter that Norbert Welsh was born in Red River, a buffalo hunter and trader who wintered in Four Mile Coulee in the Cypress Hills in 1874. Norbert Welsh was married into the Boyer family and his uncle, Charles Trottier, led the Trottier brigade. Norbert Welsh was closely affiliated with the Trottier brigade, and these three family surnames are well represented in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition.

The term “brigade” was derived from the old French term *brigare*, and was originally applied to permanent standing military units in the 17th century French Army. It’s use by

Macdougall and St. Onge is entirely consistent with customary use by Métis people and their French Canadian ancestors during the colonial fur trade period. The use of the term “band” by Harroun Foster is consistent with anthropological description, and in the writer’s opinion is used by Harroun Foster in a manner only broadly comparable with the use of the term “brigade” by Macdougall and St-Onge.

The 1878 Cypress Hills petitioners were first examined to determine kin affiliations with the Trottier and Ouellette brigades (described in Macdougall and St-Onge 2013:22, 26). In the writer’s opinion, 43 persons listed (red) in the Cypress Hills Petition appear to have surnames or marital links with the Trottier brigade, and 13 persons listed (magenta) in the Cypress Hills Petition appear to have surnames or marital links with the Ouellette Brigade. Michel Hogue pays particular attention to the Ouellette brigade and their related Bottineau kin.

*‘... Charles Bottineau and Margaret Ah-dick Songab, had deep connections to the region and to the Plains Ojibwa community in and around Pembina.... in the 1850s, three of Joseph and Angélique Bottineau’s daughters — Josephte, Angélique (Omanukwe), and Marie (Shetak) — married three brothers: François, Antoine, and Isidore Ouellette. The three Ouellette men had also moved (along with some of their siblings) from Red River to Pembina in the 1840s and 1850s. Like most of their neighbours, these men were identified as ‘hunters’ in the Pembina census.... By the late 1860s and early 1870s, all three Ouellette men were involved in trading, as were their brothers-in-law, Elzéar and Jonas Bottineau (Hogue 2015:49).*

*“In 1869, Antoine, Angelique [Ouellette], and their five children packed up their belongings and joined those who had headed west along the trail from Pembina to Turtle Mountain and eventually to Wood Mountain (ibid: 64).*

Elsewhere Hogue describes Antoine and Angelique Ouellette’s repeated efforts to obtain treaty rights or scrip for land, during 1850s-60s negotiations for treaties between the US government and Lake Superior and Mississippi Chippewa, during 1874 treaty negotiations between the Canadian government and Qu’Appelle Valley Crees and Saulteaux, and in the 1880 Musselshell River petition to the US government, along with the Spring Creek Band homesteaders in the Judith Basin, Montana (*ibid*: 112, 114-115, 184). Antoine, his father Joseph, and several other “Wallettes” (Ouellettes) are listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills petition. As such, Antoine may have been one of the primary initiators of the Cypress Hills petition, given his other experiences.

Harroun Foster (2006:83-85) identifies the family networks comprising the Spring Creek Band (in the Judith Basin, Montana) as: Charlotte Adam-LaFountain Network, Virginia Laverdure-Janeaux Network and Judith Wilkie-Berger Network. She also notes:

*“...families that would later make up the central-Montana Spring Creek Band were at the heart of Pembina social and economic life. The 1850 Minnesota Territory census and Spring Creek Band kinship records show that many of the families had close ties to Pembina and to each other.” (ibid: 41).*

Individual biographies for the Cypress Hills petitioners were reviewed by the writer in an attempt to further identify family and traditional brigade kinship links within the Spring

Creek Band, using five sources: the Louis Riel Institute Petition of 1878 from the Cypress Hills Metis: Annotated Biographies (compiled by Lawrence Barkwell n.d.), the 1850 Pembina Census (Morin 1998), the 1879 Judith Basin Roll (Correspondence 1879), the 1880 Musselshell River Petition to Col. N.A. Miles (Harroun Foster 2006:227-228: Appendix) and the Métis National Council National Online Database. 53 petitioners had surnames (underlined) or marital links with the Spring Creek Band.

Of those 53 petitioners, 19 persons listed ([blue](#)) in the Cypress Hills Petition appear to have surnames or marital links with the Lafontaine family brigade. Led by Calixte Lafontaine, the Lafontaine family and their kin the Fayants apparently formed a long established Milk River Plains hunting brigade.

*“... individuals from each of the Spring Creek family groups ... could trace their ancestry to the Pelletier family, whose Pembina presence dates to 1805.*

*“... Joseph Fagnant, half-brother of Charlotte Adam Lafontaine ... and his wife Marguerite, were neighbors [in Pembina] of Judith and Jean Baptiste Wilkie. The Fagnants and Lafontaines were connected to the Wilkies, Azures, and many other Pembina families through Charlotte Pelletier’s sister Josephite, who married Antoine Fagnant.”* (Harroun Foster 2006:41-42, 83).

12 persons listed ([green](#)) in the Cypress Hills Petition appear to have surnames or marital links with the related Laverdure and Janeaux trader families, who would have traded with brigades hunting in the Cypress Hills in 1878. According to Harroun Foster (2006:64-65) little is known of the trader Francis Janeaux’s background, although he may have moved to

the Milk River in 1866 from Fort Stevenson, Dakota Territory. More certainly his employee, Ben Kline, brought a trading party to the Milk River region in 1866, where they were immediately harassed by Montana Territory law officers for allegedly selling ammunition to the Lakota. Janeaux's wife Virginia was the daughter of Pierre Laverdure, a respected Pembina brigade leader and trader with kin ties to Pembina and White Horse Plains families, and to many Milk River families (*ibid*: 69). Hogue describes:

*"... Joseph Laverdure and his wife, Madeleine Caplette, who were part of a much larger group of migrants who left St. Joseph [Dakota Territory] in 1870. After the Laverdures celebrated a wedding, the Laverdures and many other families traveled 270 miles north and west to Wood mountain."* (2015:193).

Faced with declining buffalo herds in Dakota Territory, the Laverdures likely responded to reports about the Milk River region from their kin at the wedding and moved quickly to where they would be assured opportunities and family support.

2 Dumont and 4 Gariépy petitioners may not significantly represent either traditional brigade in the petition, but both brigades may have been hunting elsewhere in the region, or these six were simply in the Hills to visit or trade when petitioned. The Dumont brigade was very familiar with the Cypress Hills. George Woodcock in Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and his Lost World (1975:76) writes about brigade leader Gabriel Dumont's uncle Jean Dumont travelling south to live in the small Chimney Coulee winter settlement at the east end of the Cypress Hills in 1863. Gabriel Dumont's father Isidore (sr.) and son Isidore (jr.) are both listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition.

Despite their 1830s Fort Union experiences, descendants of the Gariépy family returned to the Milk River Plains and Cypress Hills in 1868. Harroun Foster notes:

*“...Turtle Mountain Métis Baptiste Gardipee and his family also left their game-depleted Dakota home and passed through the Milk River area. With a group of ten families (thirty people) and thirty carts, the Gardipee family joined Tom Lavatta, a Métis trader who had been living near Fort Benton, Montana.”* (2006:61-62).

Finally, the remaining names listed (black, not underlined) in the Cypress Hills Petition are without an identified brigade affiliation, and often are without any known family biography whatsoever. Even so, 16 Pelletiers (or Peltier, Pelloche) are of particular note for their abundant representation in the petition, their lack of individual kinship information, and their early links to Spring Creek families. As such, these Pelletiers may reflect yet another family hunting brigade in the Cypress Hills in 1878.

SIGNATORIES OF THE Petition FOR A CHANGE IN ORDINANCE NO. 5,  
 FROM THE CYPRESS HILLS HIVERNANTS, 2 AUGUST, 1878. N.W.T. Sessional Paper  
 No. 116, 1885:33-35. (From Elliott 1971: Table 7).

[David Laverdure, fils](#), Alexis Malaterre,

Ezedore Durnon, fils, [James Grant](#),

Enrie Vital, [Louis Morrin \[or Morin\]](#),

Ezedore Patrife [or Patrice], Jean B. Lange [or Langer],

[St. Pierre Laverdure](#), William Soan, pere,

Charlie Malaterre, William Soan, fils,

Ezedore Dumon, pere [or Isidore Dumont sr.], William Lafournaise,

Baptiste Jolibois, Thomas Breland,

Joseph Vilbrun, Thorny Leveill [or Leveille],

[Nerman \(or Norman\) Marion, Joseph Walette, pere, \[or Ouellette\]](#)

Francois Delorme, [Julien Walette](#),

William Bosse [or Boosah?], [Patrice Walette](#),

Elie Parents [or Parenteau], [Joseph Walette, his](#),

Pier Santigras, Pierre Labruler,

[David Boyer](#), Maxime Labruler,

[Napoleon L 'Edoux](#), Napoleon Labruler,

Antoine Rocheblave, [Eliz jar Bottineau](#),



(Elliott 1971: Table 7 - continued)

Joseph Thomas, Zacharie Le Rat,

[Francois Lafontaine](#), Pierre Levielle,

Francois Kole, [Alexandre Magills \[or McGillis\]](#),

Andre Kole, Michel Davis,

Calice Kole, Augustin Davis,

[William Fayiant \[or Fayant\]](#), Louis Davis,

Michelle St. Denee [or St. Denis], Pierre Lavalee,

Celestin St. Denee [or St. Denis], Leonore McKay,

[John Welsh](#), [Pierre Morrin \[or Morin\]](#),

Ezedore Dumon [or Isidore Dumont jr.], Joseph Leveille,

Francois Lemire, [James Walette](#),

Xavier Lemire, [Joseph Edward Marion](#),

Pascal Breland, Antoine Canada,

Patrice Breland, Pierre Smolemie [or Smalemie],

Oliver Laplante [or Leplante], Louis Malaterre, fils,

[James Whiteford \[or Whitford\]](#), [Baptiste Walette](#),

Michel Claignes, [Narcisse LaVerdure \[or Laverdure\]](#),

Ezedore Maflette [or Mallette], [Daniel L'edoux](#),

Edward Morrison [or Morrisette?], Baptiste Racette,

Norbert Delorme, Bernard Thomas,

Andree St. Germain, [Pier Ledoux](#),

Gabrielle Lavieile, Crisitome Robiard [or Robillard],

(Elliott 1971: Table 7 - continued)

Antoine Gladu, pere, **Charles Trottier**,

Antoine Gladu, his, **Andrew Trottier, sen.**

Michel Gladu, fils, **Michael Trottoir [or Trottier]**,

Joseph Michael [or Michel], **Antoine Trottoir**,

Baptiste Peltier, pere, **Henri Trottoir**

Alique Peltier, **Zedore Trottoir**,

Culbert Peltier, **Jean Baptiste Trottoir**,

James Whitford, fils, **Norbert Trottoir**,

Maxime Whitford, **John Trottier**,

Elizior Whitford, **Andrew Trottier, jun.**

Louis Whitford, **Alexandre Trottier, sen.**

David Laplante, **Moses Lan—Dre [or Moise Landry]**,

Antoine Laplante, **Norbert Welsh**,

Baptiste Briere, **William Welsh**,

Louison Briere, **Albert Welsh**,

Brisbois Briere, **Xavier Welsh**,

Geramis Briere, Paul Caplote [or Caplette],

Cleophas Briere, **Francois Boie [or Boyer]**,

Antoine Laplante, Jean Turner,

William Davis, Paul Pelloche [or Pelletier],

**Alexandre Oule [or Houle]**, **Michael Bonno [or Bonneau]**,

Alexandre Davis, fils, Henrie Bonno,

(Elliott 1971: Table 7 - continued)

Baptiste Davis, fils, [Gabriel Bonno](#),

Antoine Mallette, [William Trottoir](#),

Joseph Charette, [Alexandre Trottoir, Jun.](#)

Daniel Mechial.e (or Michel), [Antoine Lafontaine](#),

And ne Claiques, [Nepolian Lafontaine](#),

Antoine Canada, fils, [Louis Lafontaine](#),

Alexandre Canada, [Gaspard Lafontaine](#),

Culbert Lindenie, Bierre [or Pierre] Bonno, sen.

Louis Flaggat, Charles Bonne [or Bonneau],

Baptiste Chanssgno, Basil Bonno,

[Leon Laverdure](#), Pierre Bonno, jun.

Moise LaPierre, Juain [or Julien] Bonno,

Louis Malaterre, Louie Giripee, [or Gariepy]

John Malaterre, Deonieed Giripee,

[Alexandre Moron \[or Morin\]](#), Baptiste Giripee,

Gabriel Pottras [or Poitras], Ellica Giripee,

Jose Bourquin, Bonaventure Giripee,

Pier Levier [or Leveille?], Joseph Perisiah [or Parisien],

Crisitome Robiard [or Robillard], Alexander Gaddy,

Severe Amlin (or Hamlin), William Gaddy,

Modesse Feroux, James Gaddy,

Moise Vallee, Baptiste Dusann [or Dussanne, Deshain],

(Elliott 1971: Table 7 - continued)

[Antoine Wallette](#), Wallace Dusann,

Augustin Racette, Cuthbert Dusanne,

[Josbon Welsh, fils](#), Eysant Dusanne,

Jean Shakote, Leander Say Farmah,

Baptiste Pelloche, sen. [or Pelletier], Edward Say Farmah,

Alexandre Pelloche, Michel Alave,

Baptiste Pelloche, William Alave,

Cutbbert Pelloche, [Augustim Laframboise](#),

[Maxime Marion](#), Christum Dusanne,

[Ambroise LaPier \[or LaPierre\]](#), Joseph Kieise,

Paul Larivez, Duffle Bedore [or Bedard],

Pierre Boosah, sen., Pierre LeMaire,

Abram Boosab [or Boosah], Che Pierre LeMaire,

Pierre Boosah, jun., Joseph LeMaire,

Leeselog Pelloche, [Edward Laframboise](#),

Adoiphus Pelloche, [Daniel Laframboise](#),

[Joseph Boie, sen. \[or Boyer\]](#), [Che Pierre Cardinal](#)

[Joseph Boie, jun.](#), Deume Deharlais [or Desjarlais],

[Ambroise Boie](#), [Jean Baptiste Laframboise](#),

[Norbert Boie](#), [William Laframboise](#),

[Xavier Fyand \[or Fayant\]](#), [Nedy Welsh](#),

[Duffle Fyand](#), John Welsy,

(Elliott 1971: Table 7 - continued)

[Francois Fyand](#), [Gregory Welsh](#),

Alexander La Boobarde [or La Bombarde], [James Welsh](#),

Baptiste Dosa, [Edward Welsh](#),

Wesoe Teboure, [Samuel Welsh](#),

William Teboure, [Donald Welsh](#),

William Swane [or Swain], [Joseph Welsh](#),

John Swane, [Damase Welsh](#),

Alexander Swane, Terume Laforresse [or Jerome Lafournaise],

Baptiste Swane, Bernard Delorme,

Kersore Swane, Casimire Bocier [or Bercier],

Peter Fiddler, Charles Montquie [or Montigny],

Peter Bremnier [or Bremner], Patrick Montinee [ or Montigny],

Zackrias Barland, Joseph Tait, sen.,

Moses Barland, Joseph Tait, jun.,

[Xavier Barland](#), Cuthbert Tait,

Sahsoe Barland, Thomas Tait,

[Joseph Pottras \[or Poitras\]](#), Joseph Delorme,

David Pottras, James Sanderson

Termier Pottras, Wesoe Liviei [or Leveille],

Francois Pottras, Paul Liviei,

Salomon Pottras, Pierre Liviei, sen.,

Baptiste Pottras, [Baptiste Falcoe, jun. \[or Falcon\]](#),

(Elliott 1971: Table 7 - continued)

Vital Chercote, [William Sinclair](#),

Pascal Chercote, [Alexander Morrais \[or Morase\]](#),

Madais Chercote, [William Clyne \[or Klyne, Kline\]](#),

Edward Pelloche, [Duffle Clyne](#),

Nepolien Pelloche, [John Demaris \[or Desmarais\]](#),

Cuthbert Pelloche, William Sparvie,

Alexander Pelloche, Paul Sparvie,

William Pelloche, Joseph Sparvie, sen.,

Jean Baptiste Pelloche, Joseph Sparvie, jun.,

[Roderick Ross](#), St. Pierre Sparvie,

[Pierre Ross](#), Jean Baptiste Sparvie,

[Urban Ross](#)

As expected, the writer found a high degree of surname similarity between the October 4, 1879 letter from the Judith Basin Métis to Colonel N.A. Miles, A.A.A.G. at Fort Benton, and the December 6, 1879 Judith Basin Roll, i.e., the Spring Creek Band (Correspondence 1879). The 1879 Judith Basin Roll was compared to the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition. 27 of 69 persons in the Judith Basin Roll had surnames listed in the Cypress Hills Petition. 4 Métis listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition joined the Spring Creek Band (presumably with families): John Welsh, Edward Welsh, Antoine Lafontaine, William Laframboise. The Roll also designated the Judith Basin Métis family members as tribal persons in 1879.

The writer also compared the 1850 Pembina Census surnames (Morin 1998) to those noted in The History of the Metis of Willow Bunch (Rivard and Littlejohn 2003) and found: Leveille [or Leveill], **Morin [or Morrin]**, **Ouilette [or Ouellette]**, Larivée, **Grant, Poitras [or Pottras]**, Bellegarde [or Belgarde], **Bonneau [or Bonno]**, **Breland [or Barland]**, Cobelle, **Caplette [or Caplote]**, Gaudry, Legaré [a French Canadian], Fisher, Chartrand, Lacerte, Piche, **Delorme**, Champagne, Gosselin, **Hamelin [or Amlin]**, Boxer, Beauchamp, **Briere**, **McGillis [or Magills]**, **Larocque**, Rainville [or Renville], **Langer [or Lange]**, **Lafournaise**, **Houle**, Barstow, Allary [or Alary], Descouteau [or Decouteau], **Lapointe**, **Gariepy**, **Bottineau**, Amyot, Short, Adams, Beaupré, Lesperance, **Trottier**, Letourneau, Desautels, Lauzière, **Klyne [or Kline, Clyne]**, Haggeryt, Roy, Hebert, and Rivard. 26 of 51 surnames in the Willow Bunch history are the same or similar to the surnames in the 1850 Pembina Census. 20 of the surnames (**bold**) are also listed in the Cypress Hills Petition, and 14 of those can be linked with the Spring Creek Band.

The writer also compared the 1850 Pembina Census surnames (Morin 1998) to the list of Cypress Hills & Wood Mountain traders in the 1881-82 Henderson's Gazetteer and Directory: Manitoba and the Northwest Territory and found: in the Cypress Hills — **Breland, Davis, Delorme**, Francis, **Gladu**, Kennedy, Tanner-Kishiseway, Larwiere, Leboucan, **Morrien [or Morrin]**, **McKay**, Venne, **Whitford**, and in Wood Mountain — Goulet, Legarre, **Ouilette [or Ouellette]**. 8 of 16 trader surnames listed (**bold**) in the directory are the same or similar to surnames in both the 1850 Pembina Census and the Cypress Hills Petition.

### Summary and Conclusions

Métis listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition came from various locations in the British Northwest: particularly the White Horse Plains and the Red River Colony; also Willow Bunch, Lebret, Wood Mountain, Duck Lake, St. Albert, Athabaska Landing, Fort Pelly, Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan River, Fort La Corne, North West Territory, Lake Manitoba, Souris River and Baie St. Paul, Red River—and from locations in the US: Pembina, Turtle Mountain, Milk River, Montana and the upper Missouri River. Many listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition were simply borne on the plains, their recorded “locations” reflecting only where their baptisms or marriages were recorded. By 1878, most of these Métis hunted and traded regularly on the Milk River Plains and upper Missouri River, and wintered in adjacent areas such as the Cypress Hills, Willow Bunch, Wood Mountain, Frenchman River valley, Sweet Grass Hills, Bear Paw Mountains, Milk River valley, and further south in the Judith Basin.

In total, 39% of Métis identified in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition were identified by the writer as linked with either the Trottier or Ouellette brigades, or brigades linked with the Spring Creek Band. Trottier brigade members were apparently present in large numbers in the Cypress Hills in 1878, other named brigades less so. As such, the petition identifies male hunters, just as their brigades are identified by male chiefs; females reflecting marital kinship links within and between these families and brigades are not listed in the petition, but have been identified elsewhere where possible.



After the disappearance of northern buffalo herds, members of the Trottier family remained on the Milk River Plains. Max Trottier participated in the region's last buffalo hunt in 1885, during which 482 buffalo were killed by ten riders and 50 men on foot near Val Marie, Saskatchewan. Afterwards the Trottier family settled onto a ranch near Val Marie (Anonymous 2016). In 1903, the Ouellette extended family migrated to Canada in an attempt to finally settle some of their scrip claims (Hogue 2015: 226). The net results, coupled with government policies and indifference, were children borne on both sides of the border, sporadic scrip issues, and little more. Although the Berger family was one of the leaders of the Spring Creek Band, they were not present in the Cypress Hills in 1878. Presumably they hunted and wintered elsewhere on the Milk River Plains at the time, prior to migrating to central Montana in 1879. With one of the longest histories in the Milk River Plains region, the Bergers — with the Lafontaines, Janeauxs, Klines and Laverdures — remained in place by settling in the Judith Basin.

Many other petitioners likely hunted with brigades such as the Dumonts, Gariépy or Pelletiers, and most would have traveled, hunted, traded and wintered with their related kin. After 1878, a common understanding of Canadian history tells us the Dumont brigade returned to the Canadian North West Territories and fought in the 1885 resistance in Saskatchewan. Many of the Gariépy brigade returned to Turtle Mountain, obtained US treaty status and settled onto the Turtle Mountain Reservation in Dakota Territory. The brothers Eli and Leonide Guardipee (Gariépy) signed the 1880 Musselshell River Petition in Montana Territory and both later attained US Indian treaty status. Leonide was listed on the Rocky

Boy Reservation Census in 1909; Eli married and lived on the Blackfeet Reservation after 1885 (Barkwell n.d.).

The Spring Creek Band was organized from various traditional family hunting brigades. The disappearance of buffalo hunting opportunities, coupled with the structured adaptability offered by Métis brigade social structure, pushed some Milk River Métis families to form the Spring Creek Band and resolve their immediate and particular needs by migrating to and settling permanently in the Judith Basin. An examination of Spring Creek Band homestead records (in Harroun Foster 2006: ch.3) shows this band of settlers had a settlement pattern similar to overwintering *Hivernant* Métis hunting brigades elsewhere:

*“The trader group [of families] built homes and a trading post on Spring Creek about three miles south of the crossing of the Carroll Trail.... The hunting families moved a few miles east, dispersing along the small tributaries of Spring Creek, near hills rich in game. Much as they had done on the Milk River and in the Pembina region, these families settled in family clusters, far enough apart to assure adequate pasture for their stock, sufficient garden- or farmland, and plentiful small-game hunting territory, but not so far as to make frequent contact [with family kin] difficult.... “ (ibid: 102)*

A similar example is the Head-of-the-Mountain hamlet in the Cypress Hills examined in 1969-71 by the writer (Elliott 1971: figs.2, 4, 5). There, the remains of scattered clusters of wintering cabins were located along the upper branches of Gros Ventre Creek, which drains northward off the timbered northwest corner of the Hills. The excavated cabins faced southwest to catch the winter sun and were intermittently occupied for three winters by

*hivernant* Métis hunting brigade families between 1860 and 1878. Hunting families moved into the cabins in the fall season to reside in close proximity to their kin, where they were assured the wood, water, game and protection from blizzards needed to successfully survive winters on the plains and hunt buffalo for the trade in high quality winter robes. The brief descriptions of Jean Dumont wintering in the Chimney Coulee settlement in 1863 (Woodcock 1755:76) and Norbert Welsh wintering in Four Mile Coulee in 1874 (Weekes 1994:85), appear to be the only information about which brigade occupied what winter settlement in the Cypress Hills.

The Head-of-the-Mountain settlement pattern, like the Spring Creek Band settlement pattern, did not differ very much from that found a hundred years earlier in the western Great Lakes region as noted by Martha Harroun Foster at the beginning of this essay.

To conclude, what has been attempted here is the simple identification and characterization of the Métis people listed in the 1878 Cypress Hills Petition, to show how they organized themselves as nomadic buffalo hunters and traders on the dry, seemingly endless wind blown sea of grass known as the Milk River Plains. In doing so, the writer hopes this effort at identifying these families and hunting brigades will initiate further research by those with access to other genealogical and census data.

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