

Parenteau, Pierre Sr. (1817-1893)

Pierre Parenteau was the son of Joseph Parenteau Sr. (b.c. 1773) and his Cree wife Susanne. Pierre was well-known among his contemporaries as a skillful hunter in the great Métis buffalo hunts. He first married Josephite Delorme (b. 1823) and they had two children. Josephite died in 1845. He then married Marie McMillan in 1845 and in 1850 married Marie Anne Caron. One of his daughters was married to François Xavier Letendré *dit* Batoche. Pierre held HBC lot 813 at Red River, his father, Joseph, held lot 768. Pierre once owned part of the land upon which the Riel family finally settled in St. Vital. Pierre Sr. died on April 13, 1893. He is buried at St. Antoine de Padoue Cemetery, Batoche.

Pierre was a member and the Chairman of Riel's Council (Exovedate) at Batoche during the 1885 Resistance. A trusted friend and political ally of Louis Riel, Parenteau had been active in the struggle for Métis self-determination since the days of the 1869 Resistance in Manitoba. At that time he was an influential man; he was a Justice of the Peace at St. Norbert and was elected as a delegate to the Conventions of 1869-70, which discussed the formation of a provisional government at Red River.

He was elected a Captain of the Métis troops in 1871 and worked to repel the Fenian invasion. When Lieutenant-Governor Archibald visited Red River in October of 1871, Parenteau, along with Ambroise Lépine and Louis Riel, were chosen to be presented to Archibald as representatives of the Métis people.

In reaction to the political situation at Red River, Pierre immigrated to the St. Laurent-Batoche area sometime prior to 1885.

Pierre was active at Tourond's Coulee, first as one of the advance scouts, then having retreated to avoid being surrounded, he accompanied Gabriel Dumont and 60 reinforcements from the west side of the river who returned to free the men who were pinned down by Middleton's troops. This led to a full scale retreat of the government soldiers.

Pierre Parenteau, Gilbert Breland, and Isidore Dumas gave Father Cloutier the following account of events at Batoche:

La première journée (i.e. le 9 mai), samedi - Gabriel Dumont veut envoyer Isidore Dumas mettre le feu au côté des soldats pour le feu faire courir vers le camp. Il y va et est forcé de retourner avant d'avoir pu réussir -

La 2me journée (i.e. le 10 mai), dimanche - Gilbert est à l'écart (i.e. écorce), rive escarpée du cimetière avec Philippe Garnot et une quinzaine d'autres en comptant les sauvages. Les soldats, le long de la rivière, n'ont pas laissé leur camp. Ils ont échangé quelques coups sans beaucoup de résultats de part et d'autre - Isidore Dumas ne fait pas grand chose le Dimanche - Pierre Parenteau, Jean Dumont, Baptiste Rochelot, ces 3 placés dans un trou, ont été forcés de prendre la fuite, chacun son tour - Il y avait trop de balles lancées - Rochelot part le 1er; Parenteau le 2me emportant la petite hache, et Jean Dumont le dernier - Un part, et vole 8 à 10 pas dans la petite coulée, dans les rosiers; ceux du trou voyaient i.e. observaient pour voir s'ils seraient courus - On avertit 2 tireurs dans un trou près des rosiers: Elzéar Tourond, Gabriel Smith: Tâchez de vous sauver de là, on va guetter pour vous autres - Pierre Parenteau voit quelque chose de rouge dans les rosiers - On s'est rangé de là ean Dumont s'est

caché derrière un petit buisson - Pierre Parenteau s'est couché dans un chemin de vache - Je tâche d'aller au trou du bord de chez Batoche, mais une petite prairie me mettait trop à découvert - Alors j'attends un peu et j'entends parler près de moi: ce sont Baptiste Arcand et Donald Ross - Ces 2 sont venus à nous et voyant qu'on était plus mal placé, ils se sauvent vers l'écart i.e. écorce, rive escarpée de la Rivière, et tous partent après eux - Un soldat avance sur le ventre et se glisse. Un sauvage le tue, et les autres sauvages de crier en se frappant sur la bouche avec la main et sautant - Le sauvage charge sa carabine et l'appuie sur un tremble et elle tombe sur la tête du vieux Parenteau et le blesse à la tête - Les soldats sont i.e. ont remontés la côte; quelques uns suivent: Bonnet Blanc, Bapt. Montour, Falcon, et d'autres, environ 10 en tout, et /lorsqu'ils sont/ arrivés près du cimetière les soldats envoient une décharge et on gratte i.e. on se sauve en descendant et de là Pierre Parenteau va au trou qu'on lui avait assigné pour garder derrière chez Batoche.¹

He was arrested on May 19, 1885 and on August 14, 1885, at Regina he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for his part in the 1885 Resistance. He was 68 years old when sentenced.

In his testimony of August 13, 1885 at the Regina trial Father Alexis Andre said:

Pierre Parenteau I have known since I met him in the Red River Settlement, now Manitoba, since 1862. He is a man of about 72 (sic) years of age, and has eleven children, and since I first knew him has been a man of peace, one who was remarkable for the good influence he exerted over the people of his race and kindred, who, when on the plains in days now passed, a leader of his people he prevented many a bloody deed between Indian tribes and half-breeds, and always was on the side of peace and order. This good man was misled by the wily Riel telling him that the younger men of his race required the soothing and pacifying influence of the old friend and counselor of their forefathers; that it was his duty to become a leader or counselor among the people in their peaceful efforts to secure their rights... This poor old man was borne on by the appeal to his heart and conscientiously did what he thought was right. He was not in conscience or in fact guilty of any God and man today, although in a felon's cell, an honest man. To keep such an aged and respectable man as this any longer in prison must be to strike at the heart of justice and render the law a thing of scorn. His house has been burned down and all his horses and some of his cattle are lost or stolen. (CSP, 1886, Vol. 13, p. 382-383)



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¹ Cloutier, Vol. 2, pp. 34-36