

Quesnel, Jules. (1855-1911)

During the 1885 Resistance, Jules was in charge of a group of Sioux Special Constables commissioned to patrol the Indian camps in the Moose Jaw area. Quesnel, part of an old fur-trade family freighted between Fort Benton and Fort Walsh and worked as an interpreter for the N.W.M.P. He was married to Rachel McKay, the daughter of Edward McKay and Caroline Cook. In later years he ranched near the Cypress Hills. He died at Piapot, Saskatchewan.¹

Jules was born in Wyoming December 24, 1855. He became a hunter, freighter between Fort Benton and Fort Walsh, and a scout in the early days. In 1875 he heard about the building of Fort Walsh. He trailed in his 100 head of horses to the Fort and traded the horses for furs and buffalo hides which he sold in Fort Benton. Jules herded cattle for I. G. Baker Co. who had a contract to supply beef to the Indians. When the Rebellion ended, Quesnell took the contract to haul building logs from Fort Walsh to the Oxarat ranch on the south slope of Cypress Hills. When this job was finished he started for his home on Hay Creek NW1/4 20-10-25. He narrowly escaped being trapped in the Cypress Hills fire in 1886.

Mr. Quesnell built a large log livery barn in Maple Creek and lived in a log house just north of it (in area of museum and Ford Garage). Horses were held at his barn pending inspection for glanders, which was a common contagious disease at that time. For a time Jules and Percy Meggitt ran a draying service but sold out in 1909 to Dunne and Lynn. In 1910 he sold his holdings in Maple Creek and moved to Piapot, where he and Mr. Chennell opened up a lumberyard in the new town, later it became known as the Pioneer Lumber Yard.

Mr. Quesnell loved horses and took keen interest in racing both locally and elsewhere. His favorite mare was Flossie Wilkes. Mr. and Mrs. Quesnell were married at her father's home at Fort Walsh by Major Walsh of N.W.M.P. on January 22, 1877. Mr. MacKay, her father was a Hudson's Bay Trader who had brought his family to Fort Walsh from Qu'Appelle. They had one son (Yankee) who was interested in the motion picture business. He operated the first silent picture show in Maple Creek run by a gasoline engine that could be heard all over town. He sold his interest to Charlie Stearns in 1911. The Quesnelles at one time operated a ranch 17 miles north of Piapot in the Sand Hills. In 1916 the Ranchers Picnic was held here with over 2000 persons attending.

¹¹ Douglas W. Light, *Footprints in the Dust*. North Battleford: Turner-Warwick Publications Inc., 1987: 204.

Source: The Pioneers-Cypress Hills Pioneers Assn.



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