

Métis Life Along Montana's Front Range

by Rosalyn R. LaPier

In the mid-nineteenth century, as the American frontier inexorably advanced, the long time inhabitants of those areas which westward expansion swallowed up were forced to change their ways or move elsewhere. As the forests of the Upper Great Lakes were felled, and farmers began to mark off and till the denuded lands, Euro-American settlement spilled into the Plains, skittering out through the Dakotas and eventually into Montana. American Indians were forced into ever-smaller portions of their original homelands or forcibly removed from them. Economic pressures on Indian nations which had long relied on hunting and gathering wreaked havoc on tribal communities, causing starvation, despair and want on an as yet unknown scale. Maintenance of healthy communities became an untenable objective with the destruction and loss of land and resource bases.

A third group, neither Native nor Euro-American, were also deeply impacted by the rapid changes occurring on the eastern

plains. The Métis, like their Indian brethren, traveled seasonally in band groups, each consisting of several inter-related multi-generational families which traveled, worked and lived together. They made their living hunting and gathering. Also like their Indian relatives, their social structure and sense of community were based on family relationships, their survival was ensured by their skills at wresting a living from the sparse resources of the plains (together with a keen sense of humor and *joie de vivre*), and they knew how to negotiate transactions with the many types of people with whom they had contact. Though they participated in the market economy, they divided what they sold among the families of the band in an even handed manner, and did not accumulate wealth.

In some ways, however, they more resembled their European relatives. Though they had ties to the land and its resources, the ties were not spiritual. Their spirituality, in fact, was far different than that of the Indian communities they neighbored. Christianity taught them to subdue nature, which distanced them from it in a spiritual sense. While Indian cultures and identity were steeped in religious tradition that revolved around specific place, Métis culture was transportable. Not only biologically, but culturally, the Métis were a complex mix of factors inherited

from both their progenitors. And in some ways, of course, they were different from both.

The Métis ranged from the Minnesota-Ontario border west to the Rocky Mountains, with settlements at Red River and Turtle Mountain. Minnesota gained statehood in 1859, and Canada's Northwest Territories were sold from the Hudson Bay Company to the new dominion in 1869, so that by the 1860's, the Métis were leaving both Red River and Turtle Mountain permanently. Some settled in Montana, where they had previously spent their summers hunting buffalo.¹ In the years preceding the permanent migration, the Métis hunted buffalo in early summer (June), dried meat for pemmican, dried berries in late summer (mid-August), cured robes for sale in the fall and winter, and sometimes hunted again in early fall (September). They worked together in family units; one family could produce and sell 75 to 100 robes and hundreds of pounds of pemmican per season.²

The creation of Fort Benton and other trade centers provided the Métis an opportunity to trade in Montana and not make the long trek back east at the end of the season. Many Métis families migrated to the Front Range of Montana in the late 1860's and they begin to appear in the records. For example, in 1868 Eli Guardipee's family left Turtle Mountain together with nine other

Métis families and their 30 Red River carts for Montana's Front Range. Some settled at Fort Benton, while the Guardipees established themselves near a place the Blackfeet called Four Persons on the Teton River, near present day Choteau.³

The Métis who settled in Montana already had a long history of movement, migration and adaptation to new environments. Along the Rocky Mountain Front Range Métis communities were formed from the Blackfeet reservation boundary at Birch Creek, south to Dupuyer Creek, the Teton River, the Sun River and the Dearborn River and Canyon. Homesteads of individual Métis families were scattered throughout this area. In addition to the communities being established along the Front Range by the 1870's numerous Métis communities existed throughout Montana.⁴ Different bands migrated and settled in different areas of the territory.⁵ It was estimated that a little over 1,000 Métis lived in Montana in 1879.⁶

Unlike the European immigrants that would soon outnumber them the Métis did not create new communities in a new land but instead re-established community based on familial bonds and a common culture. The majority of the Métis and/or their descendants who settled along the Front Range are listed in the 1850 Minnesota Territorial census as residents of the Turtle

Mountain region. The Métis would establish a community at St. Peter's that existed from the late 1860's until St. Peter's closure in 1918 with a few individual families remaining there after. Along Ford Creek near present day Augusta a second Métis community would form beginning in the 1870's, centered around the ranch and home of Clementine LaPierre and Sam Ford. And south of Augusta in the Dearborn Canyon a third Métis community would form beginning in the early 1880's based around the home of Jack Swan and his parents James Swan, Jr. and Marie Arcand.

The Métis who lived at St. Peter's Mission, at Ford Creek and along the Dearborn canyon enjoyed a unique lifestyle. Up to four generations of Métis lived together and so traditions and old ways were passed down effortlessly through the generations. For half a century, from about 1870 to 1920 the Métis who lived in these three Front Range communities persisted in relatively self-sufficient settlements and were able to maintain their own kinship networks, language, music and unique life ways.

Antoine LaPierre, a Métis buffalo hunter,⁷ probably brought his family to the Front Range area of Montana in the 1860's because of its proximity to Ft. Benton and the availability of buffalo.⁸ The Old North Trail which runs along the Front Range of the Rockies from Canada south to Mexico was "often referred to

by old-timers locally as the Red River Trail," because of the loud squealing carts that the Métis drove across the foothills on their way to Ft. Benton to trade.⁹ Beginning in the 1860's when the buffalo were still plentiful in the area, Antoine's children would settle permanently and form the nucleus of several Métis communities. Antoine's son Francois Xavier LaPierre settled at St. Peter's Mission with his wife Mary Rose Swan and her parents James Swan, Jr. and Marie Arcand. For several decades St. Peter's Mission and the Métis community established around it would form the religious, educational and political base of the Métis in central Montana.

St. Peter's Mission was originally founded in 1859 on the Teton River, in the center of Blackfoot country, for the conversion of the Blackfeet. But for a complexity of reasons, the Jesuits had little luck in this regard early on.¹⁰ The mission moved two more times, and in 1866 St. Peter's was built at its fourth and final location along the Mullan Road, halfway between the Sun and Dearborn rivers near Bird Tail Rock, west of present day Cascade. Fearing for their safety from the Blackfeet, the priests abandoned it shortly thereafter, leaving the grounds in the care of Thomas Moran, an Irish immigrant.¹¹ Having little luck with the Blackfeet they instead began ministrations to a

growing Métis community which began to settle along the Front Range. The priests returned occasionally to administer the sacraments to the Métis, but they did not come back permanently until 1874.¹²

When the Fathers returned in 1874 their intention was still to create an industrial school for Blackfeet boys. But in April of that year the U.S. moved the southern boundary of the Blackfeet Reservation north to Birch Creek from the Teton River. St. Peter's was now over 75 miles south of the reservation boundary. Meanwhile, President Grant as part of his Peace Policy bestowed the Blackfeet reservation to the Methodist church, further complicating the Jesuits' already precarious position in the area. Except for White Calf's band, the Blackfeet were not interested in Catholicism at the time. The Métis, though, being strongly Roman Catholic for decades (their patron saint was St. Joseph) gravitated to the Mission, and came to be a primary focus of Jesuit efforts in the region.

The church at the Mission was built in 1875 and finished in the spring of 1876. It very quickly grew too small for the congregation of Métis and local settlers and an addition was added.¹³ The Métis were actively involved in the seasonal religious activities of the Mission. They participated in the

blessing of the fields and prayed for a good harvest during Rogation Days. The entire community participated in the Corpus Christi Procession which was led by twelve young Métis girls "dressed in pink dresses and white veils, strewing flowers before the Blessed Sacrament."¹⁴

This must have been quite a sight by 1880 when the community at St. Peter's numbered about 150 people, of whom 118 were Métis. At the time twenty-seven Métis families made up the community at St. Peter's.¹⁵ Most of these families were large extended families or were related through marriage.

The Fathers of the Mission spent a large amount of their time away from the Mission. The Métis families that lived at the Mission were left with the duty to oversee the care of the Mission while the Fathers were traveling. The men worked as carpenters building log cabins, ranchers, farm laborers and sheep herders, while the women worked as seamstresses, laundresses and domestics.

Father Joseph Damiani, who came to St. Peter's in the Spring of 1879, provided services throughout central Montana. He traveled up and down the Missouri River and traveled as far east at the Milk River and the Musselshell.¹⁶ As part of this traveling Father Damiani blessed marriages and baptized babies in

remote Métis communities. In the spring of 1882 he blessed the marriage of Louis Riel¹⁷ and his wife Marguerite, about 300 (river) miles down the Missouri from St. Peter's.¹⁸

Father Damiani also traveled from St. Peter's to Ford Creek on a regular basis to say mass at the Ford Ranch for the Métis people.¹⁹ Ford Creek is named after Sam Ford (Forque)²⁰, a Frenchman from Quebec who first moved to the Sun River area to run cattle for the American Fur Company at Fort Benton in the 1860's. While at Fort Benton he met a widowed Blackfeet woman, Ellen, who already had a son, Henry, by a Scot-Irish half-breed. Sam and Ellen married in 1866 and moved to her land on the Sun River where they started their own ranch and had a son of their own. Ellen died two years later and Sam Ford continued with the ranch and began to raise the two boys on his own.²¹

In 1872 he married Clementine LaPierre²², who at 16 years old was half his age. Clementine was the daughter of Antoine LaPierre, whose children also made their homes here along Ford Creek, fifteen miles west of present day Augusta. Most of the Métis community lived in the area between Willow Creek and Ford Creek. By 1880, 29 Métis families lived in the area.²³

Clementine's brother John and his family, her brother Moses and his family, her brother Alec and his family, and her sister

Euphrosine and her sister's husband Louis Malatierre lived there as well. Because of the large Métis community that lived in the area a creek just south of Willow Creek was called Breed Creek.²⁴

After the marriage of Clementine and Sam Ford who had five children together themselves, the Ford family house served as the center of Métis life at Ford Creek. Their home was used for many different activities. In addition to it being used as a place for worship it was also used as a place for community events such as dances and wedding celebrations.

In 1883 Sam Ford's oldest son Henry²⁵ met and married a young Métis girl who lived with her family at the St. Peter's Mission. Henry's new wife Mary Ann Coureheinc was born in 1867 at Devil's Lake, North Dakota and she and her family migrated to Montana and settled outside of St. Peter's Mission. They were married in the wintertime which was looked upon by the Métis as the "season of leisure and festivities."²⁶

Their wedding was a typical Métis wedding which began with a marriage ceremony at St. Peter's Mission followed by a large dance and feast at the Ford Ranch.²⁷ After the marriage ceremony they rode horse and buggy from the Mission to the Ford Ranch west of Augusta [miles?] where the Métis community awaited them. It was night when they arrived and all they could see were the

lights from the big house for miles away. "When they entered the room people were dancing, fiddlers were playing and everyone started milling around the bride and groom, laughing, talking and joking."²⁸

Clementine, who was now 27 years old, invited her new daughter-in-law Mary Ann, who was only sixteen (the same age Clementine had been when she married), into the back room where a wood stove awaited and took off her new shoes to warm her feet. Clementine gave Mary Ann a hot cup of tea while they shared stories and cried together about Mary Ann's new role in life.²⁹

Métis material life on Ford Creek was similar to others around them. They butchered their own meat, mostly beef and pork. They raised chickens for meat and eggs. They fished the streams. They had milk cows and churned their own butter. Clementine and her daughter-in-law would do all the cooking for the ranch hands. The women would spend their summers picking huckleberries, servis berries, thimble berries and choke cherries for jam and syrup. The women would also pick leaves, roots and herbs that could be found in the area and make medicine with them, especially roots and herbs that were used for childbirth.³⁰

The transition from a nomadic hunting society to a farm community had its trials and tribulations. One time Sam found

some wild rhubarb and asked Clementine and Mary Ann to make rhubarb pie for him. They had never cooked with rhubarb before but they proceeded to make four large pies. As the men dug into the pies Sam and the ranch hands were shocked to find out that Clementine and Mary Ann had chopped up the poisonous leaves of the rhubarb and made pie with it.³¹

Soon after the wedding, in April 1883, the Métis were again reminded of their tenuous position in relation to the larger society, Louis Riel moved with his wife and young son to St. Peter's Mission and came to live with the James Swan, Jr. family. Father Damiani hired him to teach at the boys' school beginning in September, so Riel spent the spring attempting to provide for his family. Come summer though he traveled to Manitoba to work on behalf of the Métis at St. Peter's. As part of the Manitoba Act of 1870 each "half breed head of family" was entitled to 240 acres of land and/or scrip valued at \$160. Obtaining their property or their money became an ongoing concern for the Métis. Since most of the Métis at St. Peter's had made the move to Montana a permanent one, twenty adults signed power of attorney to Louis Riel to sell their scrip and land at the best possible price.³²

Riel returned to the Mission community in the Fall of 1883 to begin teaching. He taught for the academic year but was called back to Canada during the summer of 1884 to help the Métis in Batoche, Saskatchewan in their ongoing struggle for land. Economic conditions had changed dramatically since Riel had been exiled from western Canada, the buffalo were gone and trade prices for other furs had significantly dropped. The need for a land base was all the more necessary for survival. Since the Manitoba Act the Canadian government recognized the Métis as having "aboriginal" rights to the land but the government never completely fulfilled its obligation.³³

In June 1884 Riel returned to Canada with his family and several Métis men from St. Peter's and Ford Creek. Even though the Métis along the Front Range viewed their move to Montana as permanent they continued to maintain sympathy for and ties with those Métis living in territories they left behind.

Riel spent the fall and winter attempting to negotiate with the Canadian government regarding the Métis grievances. Riel saw that his only option was to proclaim a Métis provisional government. After ten days of prayer Riel made that proclamation on March 19, 1885, St. Joseph's name day. The Northwest or "Riel's Rebellion" had begun.³⁴

Armed conflict followed during the spring and the Métis were subdued, thus ending the Métis hopes of a separate society in Canada. Of the Métis who settled along the Front Range who went with Riel to Manitoba, James Swan's brother John was killed at the battle of Batoche, Francois LaPierre and his brother John participated in the confrontation and John lost an arm in the fighting.³⁵ On November 16, 1885 Riel was hung for high treason.

After Riel's Rebellion, the relationship between the Métis and their original homeland was permanently severed. Their defeat occurred just after the demise of the buffalo which had provided the foundation of the Métis livelihood for generations. Father Damiani became concerned about the condition of the Métis at the Mission, especially after the destruction of the buffalo and the Riel's defeat in Canada. In 1885 he wrote the Director of the Catholic Indian Missions asking for appropriations to help the large Métis population, noting that "they are very poor" and their condition was "wors[e] than Indians."³⁶

Although by this time many Métis families had lived along the Front Range in Montana for almost 20 years and other parts of Montana before that, many were looked upon as being political refugees of Riel's Rebellion and new immigrants to Montana. Many Métis and Cree did flee Canada after Riel's Rebellion and come to

Montana during the fall of 1886 and summer of 1887.³⁷

Unfortunately for the Montana Métis, the U.S. government and some Montana citizens made no distinction between Métis who were U.S. born citizens and long time residents and those who were new immigrants.

The Métis communities that excised in Montana before the Rebellion provided refuge for the Cree Indians and the Métis who came after. At Ford Creek a large group of Cree Indians came during the fall of 1886 and stayed throughout the winter until they move on during the summer of 1887 to the Flathead reservation.³⁸ This band of Cree Indians set up their winter camp near the Métis settlement at Ford Creek. Sam Ford upon seeing their destitute condition provided them with food and employment. But he soon realized that he would be unable to provide for them for the entire winter. Sam Ford organize a group of local businessmen to help the refugees and their families. They petitioned both the general public through the *Helena Independent* and other newspapers and the Montana Territorial legislature to help provide for the Cree. The Montana Territorial legislature appropriated \$500.00 and forwarded it to Sam Ford in January 1887.³⁹

Around this time because of discrimination and persecution toward the Métis that followed Riel's Rebellion some Métis with long established roots in Montana began to move into the canyon areas along the Front Range. Although for a time the Métis formed the majority of the population in some of Montana's frontier communities they would soon become the minority.

The families that had formed the nucleus for the St. Peter's Métis community had now moved on into the Dearborn Canyon⁴⁰, north to Choteau and the Teton river canyon, and to Dupuyer, while others moved east to Zortman near St. Paul's Mission.⁴¹ A couple of families, continued to live near St. Peter's, and a few others, continued to work for the Ursuline girls' school until its closing in 1918.

Living in the canyons along the Front Range provided the Métis the protection they believed was necessary to safeguard their families. The Métis who lived in the canyons re-created yet another community in which they lived off the land. They rarely came to town, usually just to do business and trade for provisions, and then it was often just the men who came. They were afraid of the U.S. government's attempts to extradite them to Canada, although the vast majority were U.S. citizens. They

were also afraid of the Canadian Mountie's attempts to return them to Canada.⁴²

Most of the Métis who lived in the Dearborn Canyon spent their summers living in cabins and tents that were located between one half-mile and two miles apart along the canyon.⁴³ In the winter they would move down to the mouth of the canyon where Jack Swan's cabin stood.⁴⁴ Jack Swan was the recognized leader of the Métis who resided on the Dearborn.

Jack Swan was the son of James and Mary (Arcand) Swan.⁴⁵ Until their move to the Dearborn canyon Jack and his parents lived at St. Peter's Mission, where they served host to Louis Riel and his family during Riels one year interlude as a teacher at the mission.⁴⁶ Jack's wife Eliza Nome and her parents, Paul Nome and Marie (Demora) Nome, also lived at the Mission.⁴⁷ After they moved to the Dearborn Canyon following Riel's Rebellion, Jack and Eliza raised fifteen children.

In the summer Jack Swan organized all the young men and hired them out to local ranches for work. He then collected all the wages for the summer. In the fall after he made sure that all the families had adequate clothing and food for the winter he distributed any left over money to each family.⁴⁸

While the young men were hired out to local ranches over the summer, other members of the family spent their summers cutting fence posts and poles to trade in town for dry goods. They also built cabins for other homesteaders and ranchers.⁴⁹ In the winter they hunted and trapped.⁵⁰ Near Jack Swan's cabin were several small one-room cabins and many of the Métis families stayed in those or in tents on both sides of the river all winter long.⁵¹

New Year's was the big yearly celebration and part of the summer money was put towards holding a big dance. At New Year's everyone in the whole area was invited to Jack Swan's extra long cabin⁵² which had a "good, smooth floor." The length and duration of the celebration depended on the type of year the community experienced economically. A "five-gallon dance" meant the year had been good and they could afford to buy five gallons of whiskey and food for the several days of dancing and revelry. A "three-gallon dance" meant it had been a poor year.⁵³

The celebration would begin at midnight when families would sit down to enjoy a feast of rubbaboo (boiled jackrabbit with flour gravy), bullets (meatballs), pemmican (pulverized dried meat mixed with berries and fat), fry bread, pies and cakes. All

of the families would go from house to house visiting each other and eating. When they were done eating the dance would begin.⁵⁴

In those days most of the men and boys could play the violin and when they held a dance the men would fiddle and drink whiskey at the same time. The men would play the fiddle until they fell over drunk. Then the next person grabbed the fiddle and kept playing. Sometimes the boys would have to play for twelve hours straight. Everyone danced, men, women, and children and enjoyed themselves until they ran out of whiskey. At that point the dance, which sometimes lasted several days was over.⁵⁵

The Métis children from the Dearborn Canyon attended school in Clemons, the small "town" at the mouth of the canyon near Bear Lake. The children from Ford Creek rode by horseback fifteen miles into Augusta to attend school.⁵⁶ Most of the Métis attended school sporadically. They would come for one week and then miss two or three.⁵⁷ Some of the Métis children, especially girls, were sent to boarding school at St. Peter's Mission, St. Paul's Mission in Hays or to Fort Shaw Industrial School.

The Ursuline girls' school played an important role in the religious education of Métis girls from these communities. The 1900 Montana census shows a roster of over 100 Indian girls and 75 white girls. Of the 100 Indian girls many were Métis, but the

Sisters enumerated them as Blackfeet. They did this because the U.S. government paid the Sisters to educate Indian girls, but not Métis girls. The U.S. Indian Bureau contacted the Mission believing that the children listed as Blackfeet were actually Métis. The Mission challenged the U.S. to prove which children were Blackfeet and which were Métis. After an inspection of the school the U.S. conceded that although the school listed all the Métis children as Blackfeet it was not unlikely that they did have some Blackfeet blood in their background. The U.S. also conceded that to determine either side would entail a complete "pedigree" of each child.⁵⁸ This was something that is not easily done.

The Métis sent their daughters to St. Peter's from all the major Métis settlements in Montana. Most came from the Front Range area while others traveled from as far away as the Milk River.⁵⁹ Like the Jesuits before them, the Ursulines intended to convert the Blackfeet but had little luck in that regard. Their yearly reports to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission's consistently reported a 90% enrollment of "mixed-blood" students.⁶⁰

Métis girls and boys were also educated in other boarding schools in Montana. Some Métis children from the Front Range went

to school at St. Paul's Mission on the Ft. Belknap Indian Reservation. The Azure family had already relocated to Zortman by then and a large Métis community existed near St. Paul's.⁶¹ The Métis also sent their children to Fort Shaw Industrial School directly north of St. Peter's on the Sun River.⁶²

As the Métis continued to relocate and re-settle in different parts of the Front Range and Montana they still continued to marry within the group. Going to the same boarding schools provided Métis from different parts of Montana an opportunity to associate and eventually marry. But long standing family relationships continued to be just as important. In 1900 Mary Azure and John LaPier, the grandson of Antoine LaPierre, met and married at Fort Shaw. Both of their families, the Azures and LaPiers, had originally settled at St. Peter's Mission in the 1870's, but the Azures re-settled to Zortman and the LaPiers to Ford Creek near Augusta. John LaPier and Mary Azure's children would be born at Ford Creek and eventually raised in the Dearborn Canyon.

The life of the Métis along the Front Range ended for the most part when the first generation began to die and because of a combination of complex economic and social forces. The community scattered to different parts of Montana, moving onto reservation

communities or creating new settlements in urban areas.

Eventually many of the Métis people from Augusta and the Dearborn followed the Ford family to Great Falls to create yet another Métis community.

In 1891 Father Damiani, a long time friend of the Métis, moved north to Holy Family Mission which he had recently opened on the Blackfeet Indian reservation along the Two Medicine river. In 1898 the Jesuits discontinued operations at St. Peter's and moved permanently to Holy Family Mission. The Métis did not follow them. The Ursuline sisters, who came to St. Peter's in 1884 continued to run a girl's school at St. Peter's until 1918 when it burned down.⁶³

Clementine and Sam Ford eventually moved into Great Falls in 1898 when Sam was 65 and wanted to retire from active work.⁶⁴ They were remembered for their hospitality to all people. Travelers, especially Indians, knew that they could always stop at the Ford Ranch and be treated favorably. Sam Ford sold most of his property in the Augusta area, leaving some land and cattle for his children. He bought property in Great Falls and lived there until his death in 1916. Clementine lived until 1943.

Thus began the decline of the old Métis life ways along the Dearborn. The old-timers continued to carry on traditions, but

some were lost with the coming of a new generation. Jack Swan, a tall man who spoke very little English and spoke mostly French and Cree,⁶⁵ continued to wear moccasins, a beaded vest and a Red River sash with a tobacco pouch until his death in 1913.⁶⁶ Like him, his brother-in-law Francois LaPierre dressed with a sash, tobacco pouch and leggings and drove a Red River cart until he died in 1928.⁶⁷ The women as well within this first generation wore the traditional all black dress and shawls of Métis women. But with their passing these visible symbols of Métis culture disappeared. Francois changed his name to Frank LaPier and his wife from Marie to Mary beginning the process of Americanization that the next generation carried on.

The modernization reflected in employment patterns as well. The Métis first came to Montana to hunt buffalo, but their basic economy changed over time. The Métis at St. Peter's Mission took jobs as laborers for the mission, cultivating its gardens, managing the small ranch and working for the boy's and girl's schools. The Métis at Ford Creek worked as ranch hands for Sam Ford and others and developed subsistence gardens and farms. The Métis at Dearborn Canyon became woodhawkers and cabin builders living off the land during the summer, and hunting and trapping in the winter. The Métis of the Front Range would eventually move

into large towns and cities and work for industrial plants and factories.

Yet despite these changes the core of Métis life ways continued. Though jobs changed, the economy remained subsistence and communal. Though clothing changed, the core values of family and community remained. And some things, such as language and music, were still not lost at all. Arthur Baptiste LaPier, the great-grandson of Antoine LaPierre was born at Ford Creek in 1905 and raised in the Dearborn Canyon. His first languages were French and Cree. He learned the old Métis music and songs from his grandmother Mary Rose (Swan) LaPier and began playing the fiddle when he was twelve. When Art turned 15 in 1920, Frank (formerly Francois) LaPier gave his grandson the fiddle he had brought with him to Montana. It was a fiddle that Francois played at dances at St. Peter's Mission during the 1870's and later at Ford Creek and the Dearborn.

The time period from when Frank LaPier first began to play his fiddle in the Front Range area (around 1870) to the time when he passed on his heritage to his grandson in 1920, marked a time period that saw great change in the way the Métis in Montana lived their lives. Once again the Métis adapted. Their communities endured despite regular shifts in location, and

economic and political forces beyond their control. The Métis possessed strong family ties and cultural values that worked in combination to help them keep their communities from deterioration.

Endnotes

1. Guardipee, Eli. September 27, 1940. Oral History. Montana Historical Society Archives, SC 772.
2. Harvard, V. "The French Half-Breeds of the Northwest," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year 1879*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 319-20.
3. Guardipee, Eli. September 27, 1940. Oral History. Montana Historical Society Archives, SC 772.
4. Harvard, V. "The French Half-Breeds of the Northwest," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year 1879*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 316.
5. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office, 15-16, 26-27, 58.
6. Harvard, V. "The French Half-Breeds of the Northwest," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year 1879*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 316.
7. Sprague, D.N. *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation: The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement, 1820-1900*. (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983). According to Table 1 in Sprague, Antoine LaPierre was married three times. His first wife Josephte died in 1835 at age 40 and Catherine Gagnon his second wife died in 1850 at age 35. Bethsy Cree his third and possibly

final wife was probably a Cree or Métis woman named Elizabeth. It is assumed that Antoine had children by all three wives. Antoine LaPierre is listed in the 1850 Minnesota Territorial Census as a hunter. Previously he is listed in Sprague as working for the Hudson Bay Company as a fisherman (1825-28) and a laborer (1829-43).

8. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office, 26.

9. West, Helen B. "Blackfoot Country," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. 10:4 (October, 1960.), 38.

10. Harrod, Howard L. *Mission Among the Blackfeet*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971).

11. Schoenberg, Wilfred, S.J. "Historic St. Peter's Mission: Landmark of the Jesuits and the Ursulines Among the Blackfeet," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. 11:1 (Winter, 1961.), 80.

12. Schoenberg, Wilfred, S.J. *Jesuits in Montana: 1840-1960*. (Portland: The Oregon-Jesuit, 1960), 35-40.

13. McBride, Sister Genevieve. *The Bird Tail*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 69.

14. McBride, Sister Genevieve. *The Bird Tail*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 77.

15. Montana Territorial Census, 1880.

16. Sun River Valley Historical Society, *A Pictorial History of the Sun River Valley*, (Shelby, MT: Promoter Publishing, 1989),

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17. Louis Riel was the national hero and leader of the Métis. He had been living in exile in Montana after a failed attempt to

create a Métis provincial government in western Canada in 1869-

70. He had lived in Montana for several years and became actively involved in the politics of the region. See Howard, Joseph.

Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People. (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, Publishers, 1974).

18. Howard, Joseph. *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis*

People. (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, Publishers, 1974), 346-

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19. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, (Choteau: Pine Press, 1978), 288.

20. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, (Choteau: Pine Press, 1978),

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21. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, (Choteau: Pine Press, 1978), 189.

22. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, (Choteau: Pine Press, 1978), 188-

199, 287-289.

23. Montana Territorial Census, 1880.

24. Gray, Raymond. *History of the Cree Nation*. W.P.A. Writer's Project, Montana Historical Society, January 16, 1942.

25. Henry was the adopted son of both Clementine and Sam. He is the son of a Blackfeet woman, Sam's first wife Ellen, and a Scot-Irish half-breed. In addition to Sam's two sons, Henry and Joe, Clementine and Sam had five children together, Eddie, who died at age seven, Louisa, Sam, Jr., Amelia (Millie) and Josephine.

26. Harvard, V. "The French Half-Breeds of the Northwest," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year 1879*.

(Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 324.

27. Ibid.

28. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, 190.

29. Ibid.

30. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, 193.

31. Augusta Heritage Committee, *In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area*, 190.

32. Riel, Louis. *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/ Les Ecrits Complets De Louis Riel*. (Calgary: University of Alberta Press,

1985). Volume 2.

33. Howard, pp. 305-382.

34. Howard, pp. 305-382.

35. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. P. 13.

36. Marquette University. Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records, St. Peter's Mission, Letter to J.A. Stephan from J. Damiani, May 13, 1885.

37. Gray, p. 158.

38. Gray, p. 162.

39. Gray, pp 109-112.

40. Montana State 1900 Census, lists the Jarvy's, Sangray, Nome, and Swans and the Montana State 1910 Census lists the Swans, Malatares, Gervais, Pocha and LaPiers at the Dearborn.

41. The Métis who lived at Holy Family Mission were from different families.

42. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. P. 6-7.

43. Kenck, Richard. June 22, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1660. P. 1.

44. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. P. 19 and [need fn for tents]

45. Montana Territorial Census, 1880 and Montana State Census,

1910 list him as being born in Canada.

46. Howard, Joseph. Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People. (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, Publishers, 1974). P.

355. Riel and his family lived at the Mission from the summer of 1883 to the summer of 1884.

47. Augusta Heritage Committee, In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area. pp. ?? and the Montana Territorial Census, 1880.

48. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. Pp. 3-5.

49. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. P. 6. And LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office.. P. 30.

50. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office.. P.2

51. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. P. 19 and [need fn for tents]

52. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. P. 19.

53. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. Pp. 3-5.

54. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. Pp.66-71.

55. Kenck, Richard. June 7, 1994. Oral History. Montana Historical Society. OH 1653. Pp. 3-5. And LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. Pp.66-71.

56. LaPier, Art.

57. Augusta Heritage Committee, In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area. Pp. 254, 285.

58. McBride, Sister Genevieve. The Bird Tail, (New York: Vantage Press, 1974). Pp. 163-66.

59. Montana State 1900 Census. The Métis girls at the Urseline school in 1900 included girls from the Fluery, Guardipee, L'Henromse, Pambrun, Peltier, Poulin, Swan, St. Germaine, LaRogue, LaVander, LeBarge, LePlant and Landre' families.

60. Marquette University, Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records, St. Peter's Mission, Series 2/1, Box 19, Folder 5, Reports for years 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910.

61. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. P. 16 and 25.

62. Over the years many Métis children were educated at Fort Shaw. The 1900 Montana census listed children from the Ford, Guardipee, Hull, LaPier, LaRance, Pelletier, St. Germaine, St. Clair and Swan families in attendance.

63. McBride and Schoenberg.

64. Augusta Heritage Committee, In the Shadow of the Rockies: The History of the Augusta Area. P. 288.

65. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. P. 75.

66. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. P. 42.

67. LaPier, Art. April 3, 1979. Oral History. Little Shell Band of Chippewa Office. P. 42.