

How The West Was Surveyed

by C. D. Denney

Some folks in searching for their roots have found that they need to understand the system of surveying in western Canada. To someone from Europe, or Ontario or Quebec the western system is quite strange.

Fortunately for us, the federal government in 1870 decided that the west should be laid out in more-or-less square blocks, each containing thirty six sections of 640 acres. Each such block of land was to be called a township.

The townships were to be numbered from the fortyninth parallel, which for all of western Canada is the boundary between Canada and the United States of America. The north line of the township was the Township Line. Folks from the rest of the world should note that a "Township Line" out here has very little significance. What is important is the whole township. Also, that they are numbered from the first one, next to the U.S. border, to the very north of the provinces. If you look at a map of either of the prairie provinces you will see that there are 126 rows of them, provided they are marked on the map, of course.

These townships are stacked up on top of each other like a tower of children's building blocks. There are, naturally, other townships, side by side. That meant that that there had to be some way of numbering them from east to west. For some other reason also, it was necessary to establish a number of points from which to do the numbering.

Since the first real settlements of western Canada were in Manitoba, that is where the first surveys were made. And it is there that the first line from which to number the townships horizontally was established. Starting at the forty-ninth parallel about eleven miles west of the present day Emerson a line was plotted directly to the North Pole. It passed a couple of miles west of Headingly, where a monument has been located to mark it. This they called the PRIME MERIDIAN.

Thirty or forty townships further west it established another line running directly to the North Pole. This became the SECOND MERIDIAN. You can identify it with Wapella, and Kamsack, near the eastern border of Saskatchewan.

Another thirty townships west there was established the THIRD MERIDIAN. It, too of course headed directly to the North Pole. You will find it runs right through Davidson, Saskatchewan, and forms the eastern boundary of Prince Albert National Park.

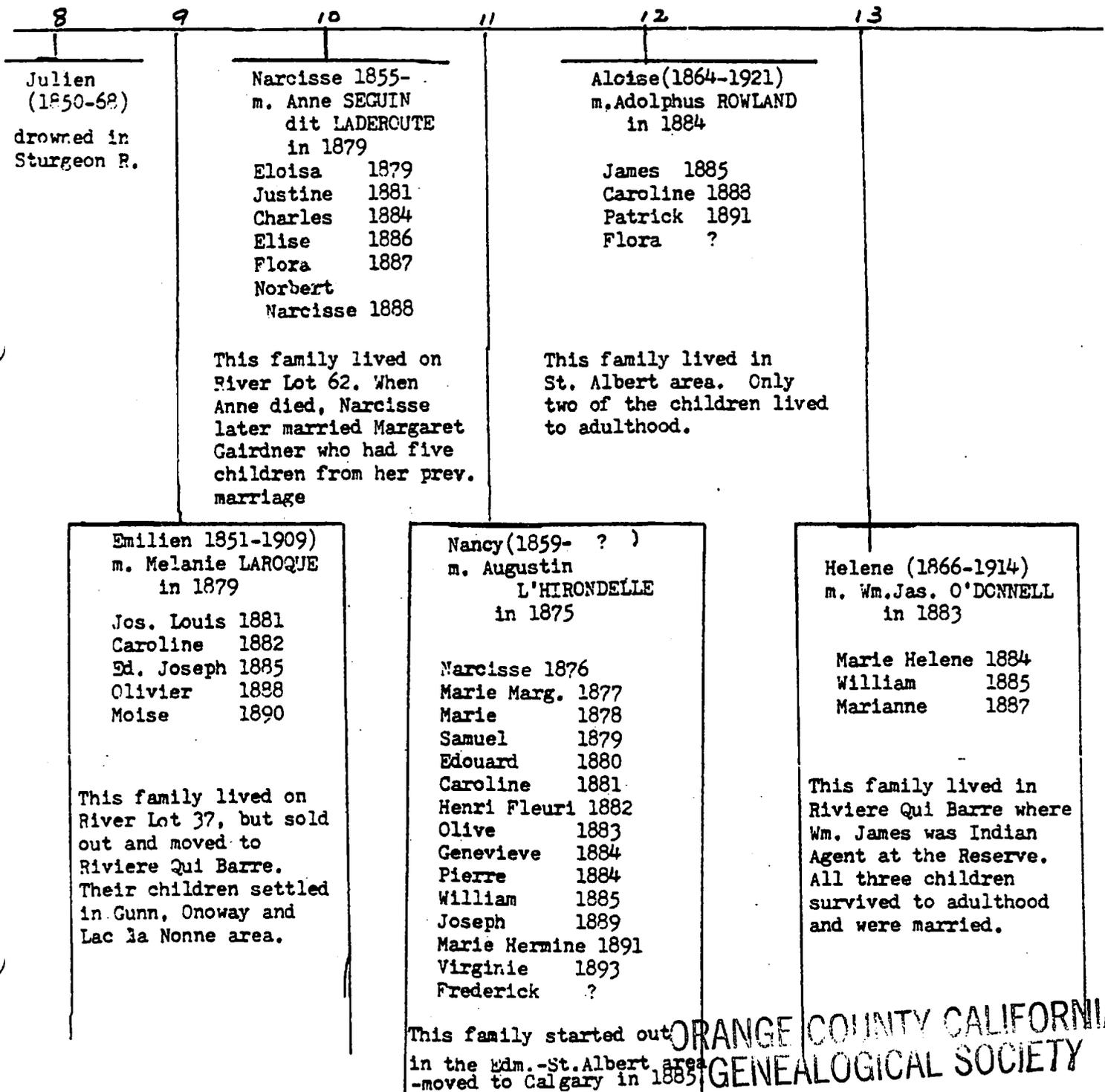
Since they hadn't run out of country, the surveyors decided another thirty townships was a good reason for establishing the FOURTH MERIDIAN. You will find it is the boundary between Alberta and Saskatchewan. It, of course, also headed for the North Pole.

The FIFTH MERIDIAN runs through Calgary and Stony Plain, while the SIXTH MERIDIAN is identified with Jasper and Crooked Creek.

These townships, along side each other, are said to be in RANGES. So the township that is number 34 west of the Prime Meridian is in Range 34. The one immediately west of the Prime Meridian is in Range 1. Both are described as being "west of the first". And all the way west the townships are described as being in Range 1, West of the nearest Meridian to the east. For example, Maple Creek, Sask., is in "Township 11, Range 26, West of the Third". In Alberta, Calgary is in "Township 24, Range 1, West of the 5th", Camrose is in "Township 47, Range 20, West of the 4th", and Grande Prairie is in "Township 71, Range 6, West of the 6th".

Prepared - January 1981
by: Dorothy J. Chartrand

* _____ indicates my lineage.



ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

* Pierre Hyacinthe dit BELLEROSE
m. Marie BIDOUZET (in France)

* Joseph Hyacinthe dit BELLEROSE (1720-1790)
m. Madeline JOYALLE in St.Fr.du Lac, P.Q.
in 1761

Michel(1762) m. 1785	Joseph m.1789	Benjamin m.1794	* <u>BENONI (1781-1837)</u> m.Monique CHARET in 1806	Cecile m.1796	Angelique(1771) m.1797
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Philippe(1807)	* <u>Olivier(1809-1891)</u> m. Josephite SAVARD in 1833 (1846)	Monique Adelaide (1821-1822)	Julie m. 1827	Olive m.1835	Jos.Severe b.&d.1823
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	<p>Benjamin (1840-70) m. Julie NAULT in 1863</p> <p>Josue 1867 Zacharia 1869</p> <p>Benjamin d. 1870 from smallpox likely. His widow Julie then married Michel PLANTE</p> <p>Josue only survivor married & lived at Grouard.</p>		<p>Marie (1843- m. Chas. BEAUREGARD in 1865</p> <p>Marie 1866 Jeanne Elise 1866 Julien 1868 Justine 1873 Louis 1883 Norbert 1885 ? ?</p> <p>This family lived on River Lot 43 in St. Albert. They moved to St. Paul district and lived out their lives there. They had 9 children, and farmed.</p>		<p>Norbert(1846-1909) m. Marie FLANTE in 1869</p> <p>Victor Ed. 1870 Julien 1873 Marie 1875 Marie Jane 1876 Emilien 1878 Elise 1882</p> <p>This family lived on River Lot 41. Sold out and moved to Athabasca Landing. Norbert killed in lumbering accident. He was a boat builder.</p>		

Olivier (1839-1870)
m. Cath.SURPRENANT
in 1861

Benjamin 1863
Samuel 1864
Monique 1866
Olive 1868

This family lived in
the Edm.-St.Albert
area until father
passed away with Small
pox. His widow moved
to Sask. - married
Joe Lambert. There are
descendants living at
Lestock, Sask.

Olive (1842-1929)
m. 1. L. Lawrence 1860
Victor
m. 2. Jos. Benoit 1868
Joseph
m. 3. Wm. Cust 1880
no children

Lawrence lived on R.Lot
36. Benoit had R.L. 34.
Cust was an immigrant
from Ireland - purchased
and farmed considerable
land in the St. Albert
Settlement.

Modeste
(1845-62)
age 16

* Octave (1849-1909)
m. Lucie L'HIRONDELLE
in 1872

Marguerite 1873
* Pierre 1875
Nancy 1877
David 1877
Francoise 1879
James 1881
Helene 1883

Octave & Lucie settled
on River Lot 38 and
raised their family here
Both died at St.Albert.
Children married and
settled in Edmonton-
St.Albert area except
for Francoise who
lived at High Prairie.

business in 1911, including the Livery Stable he operated at Athabasca Landing and took up full time farming in that year at Colinton, later moving back to his portion of River Lot 35, in 1914.

When he established himself in the freighting business out of Athabasca Landing, in 1903, he married Justine BEAUDRY, of Egg Lake (now Mearns). They set up house-keeping in Athabasca Landing. Of this union thirteen children were born. I, the writer of this history was the eleventh child. We all had schooling at a one roomed school in the country, situated just north of our property. It was called the Guibault School and had been established in 1914. The Bellerose School District, by this time, had been designated to the area south of the Sturgeon River, and a new school was built just west of the present day 127 Street, near the property of John Harrold, another old-timer in the district.

During the Second World War, 1939-45, four of our family served in Canada nad overseas, namely Alfred, Dorothy (myself), George and Harry - the first three served in the Army and Harry was in the Navy.

At the time of this writing, there are still nine surviving children in the Pierre Bellerose family. Three of the brothers have passed on, one in 1969 and two in 1980. The oldest, a girl, died in infancy.

Being of metis birth has not deterred any of us from following in the footsteps of our forefathers; though, unfortunately, the three languages have now been cut down to very little knowledge of the Cree and French languages. As children being reared on the farm we had our time for play, but we also learned to work. There were no jobs that either boys or girls did not do at some time or other. We always were able to take over the chores and fieldwork if necessary and the boys did the same around the house - helping with the household chores.

There were a few occasions in early childhood when the word "Metisse" was flung at us, but we learned to ignore the remarks of our fellow students. We were capable of and did just as well as they did in the classroom. We graduated with determination to do better things in life and I think most of did just that. We have been hard working, upright citizens of this our country, Canad. We are proud of our heritage and are teaching our children and grandchildren to be proud citizens, also.

Olivier was a man of average build - about five feet five inches tall, and he weighed about 155 - 160 lbs., according to descriptions from an old uncle. He was a man of great courage, a caring, loving family man, and he was a man of great compassion as documented by Wm. B. Cameron in "When Fur Was King". In the year 1845, at Fort Assiniboine it is said that he released three Snake Indian Women who were prisoners of the Assiniboine Indian Tribe. While the Assiniboine braves feasted and deliberated the necessary action to be taken against these captive women, who were bound and lying naked in a teepee, Bellerose sneaked into their tent, cut their bonds, gave them his skinning knife, flint and some punk and helped them escape to the river. It is said that they went down the Athabasca River and two who stayed on the river were never seen again. The third woman went up the Baptiste River and by sheer determination lived alone and survived. She was discovered along the shore of the Baptiste River by one of the hunters who took her back to the Snake Indian territory near Jasper House and she lived her last years in the employ of the wife of one of the Post Managers.

Though some of the Bellerose men were big men, my grandfather, Octave was of the same stature as his father before him. He was also a hard working man and freighted for many years, even venturing as far as Fort Chipewyan with horses and sleighs on one occasion. It is documented in the early issues of the Edmonton Bulletin, that he also had several teams freighting goods from the end of the Railway when it reached Swift Current on its way west. The route followed would parallel the present day Highway 14 which cuts across to the Saskatchewan border via Camrose and Wainwright, thence south easterly.

Octave, in 1873, married Lucie L'Hirondelle, a metis woman, and they had seven children. During his tenure of River Lot 38, he spearheaded and got a school established which was called Bellerose School, No. 6. That school, built of logs, and used for purposes other than a school for years on the farm, now stands on 1885 Street in Fort Edmonton.

It was also in 1885 that Octave and his brother Norbert joined the St. Albert Mounted Riflemen - a company of volunteers - who banded together for the protection of the settlers at the various missions and settlements when Big Bear and his Crees were on the warpath farther east, nearer the scene of the Riel Rebellion in Saskatchewan territory. Octave was Second Lieutenant of the Company of Riflemen who offered their services to Major Strange's Alberta Brigade when it came up to this area from Calgary. He remained a member of this Company from May 1885 to July 1885 during which time he rode out with a platoon of men to aid the mission at Lac La Biche.

There were seven children born to Octave and Lucie, of which my father, Pierre, was their second born. My father, Pierre, a big man who stood five feet eleven inches and weighed over two hundred pounds, was a gentle, caring man and a diligent worker. He also farmed, but was first a freighter, guide and interpreter. His freighting days were spent between Edmonton and Athabasca Landing, mainly, where he ran an express service and coach service as well as freighting heavy cargo. He also freighted on the frozen Athabasca River up to Grouard and downriver to Waterways. He sold out his

and stashed away on platforms built high enough to keep away the predator animals -- bear, lynx, wolves, wolverine and coyotes. There was never a dull moment. Many a cold night he spent lying in lean-to shelters built along the edge of the woods in front of a camp-fire. His buckskin clothing protected him from the cold.

With a total take of anywhere from 20,000 to 30,000 beaver during the winter months, together with other small animal furs, the post was a busy place. In the spring the men would ready their canoes and freight loads for the annual spring trip to Fort Edmonton, as soon as the ice disappeared on the lake and by not later than mid-May for departure of the brigades heading east with their York boats which they were now finding very useful.

Soon, once again, Olivier would say farewell to Josephte and head out with the brigade, across the lake, down the Slave River, up the Athabasca River to Fort Assinaboine and across with pack horses to Fort Edmonton. While at Fort Edmonton, he would ride out with the buffalo hunters southeast into the Beaver Hills area, and reloading his musket at least three times during the chase, he would bring down his buffalo bulls, dropping a glove or other article to later identify his trophy, and returning when the buffalo moved too far away. The ladies that accompanied the hunters would immediately start their campfires and get to work on cutting the meat into strips which they hung on poles over the fire. A great feast of buffalo tongues would be enjoyed at the scene. The dried meat, pemmican with Saskatoon berries, and hides would be packed and transported back to the Fort on travois or carts, possibly a combination of both methods.

At the fall hunt which he also enjoyed whilst he was in the Fort Edmonton area to pick up supplies that had arrived from the east, he would again kill several buffalo. If the weather was cool enough, some of the meat would be left at a cache and transported to the Fort with horse sleds and dog sleds once the snow had fallen. There could be as many as sixty horse sleds measuring fourteen feet long and fourteen inches wide (a sled that carried meat from two full carcasses) and the dog sleds capable of carrying 450 to 550 pounds each. When one considers that the daily ration issued to employees and their families was based on an average of two and one half pounds of pemmican or three pounds of dried meat per man, per day, with smaller portions for the wives and children it is no wonder that they seemingly slaughtered animals in huge numbers. They were able to supplement this ration with fresh meat from rabbits, beavers and other edible animal, along with some fish from the lake. Very little flour for their bannock was available, and only a small portion of tea and sugar was issued. It is no wonder then, that on their treks, they made tea from the plant we now know as "muskeg tea".

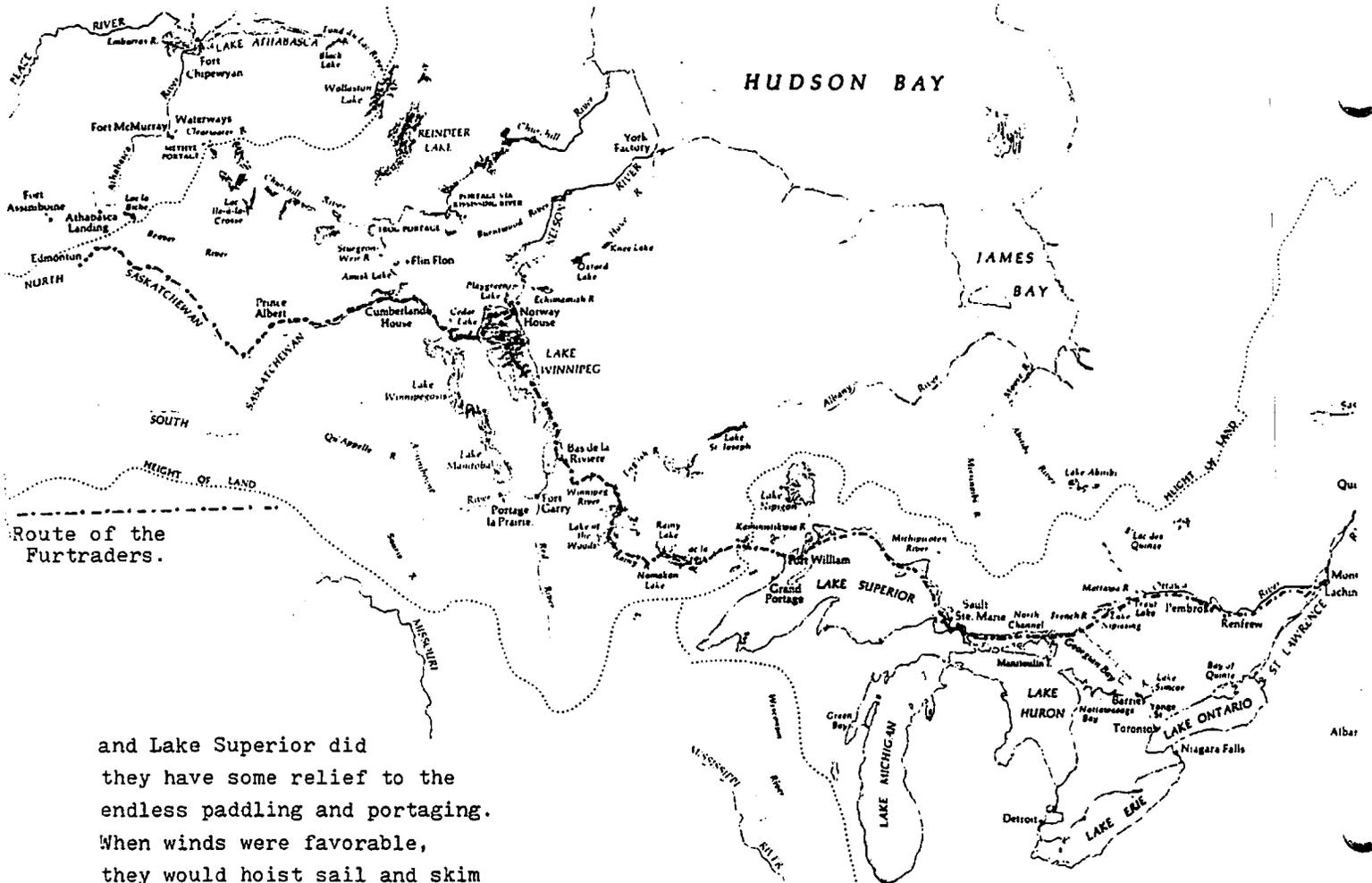
So the years passed for Olivier and Josephte, and by 1856 they had ten children and a lean-to built on their log shack on the shore of Lesser Slave Lake. On his many trips to and around Fort Edmonton, Olivier had seen the fertile valley of the Sturgeon River, just ten miles north of the Fort. He was by this time contemplating settling nearer to Fort Edmonton. He and his family ventured to the area of the valley, which later became known as St. Albert, in 1857. Here their eleventh child was born. The next one arrived in 1863 while they were in the area of Fort Pitt, north-west of the present day Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Dog Lake, over the Savanne Portage to Rainy Lake, down the Rainy River to Lake of the Woods. Heading almost directly north now they would reach the outlet into the Winnipeg River with its many spectacular falls and rapids. Alas, there had been many lives lost in this area, but Antoine and Olivier were spared any tragedy on this trip. Except for several soakings along the way and having to sit in their wet clothes until camp was made that night, they did not suffer otherwise. Into Lake Winnipeg, they would then turn and following the east shore, finally reach Norway house where their freight loads were once again re-sorted, with a portion of their cargo going on up the Saskatchewan river and some going to York Factory, thence following the Burntwood and Churchill rivers, the Methye Portage across to Fort McMurray where the Clearwater River merged with the Athabasca River and to Fort Chipewyan on the western edge of Lake Athabasca.

Olivier and Antoine parted company here, for Antoine was going to Fort Chipewyan first. The two dear friends parted company with gay adieus -- they were sure they would meet again. Now, with fewer boats and a new trip master, Olivier helped with paddling, towing, portaging and camp chores for another stretch of the journey measuring about 1500 miles before they reached Fort Edmonton. At Fort Edmonton the loads were once again re-sorted with some going farther west to the Rocky Mountain House and Jasper House posts. Olivier was to go with the brigade team heading for Lesser Slave Lake Post, on the western edge of Lesser Slave Lake where Grouard now stands.

The first portion of this particular trek was made overland on horseback and with pack horses. The journey through the muskeg territory would take a minimum of six days, all the while being ravaged with mosquitoes and biting insects, whenever they stopped to camp. Once they reached Fort Assinaboine, they took to boats again, traveling down the swift flowing Athabasca River to its junction with the Slave River. There they turned northwest, following the Lesser Slave River to its point of origin on the east end of Lesser Slave Lake, possibly sailing across the lake if the wind was favorable, finally reaching their destination, where every one in the village turned out to meet them, with the warmest welcome. Tonight there would be fun and feasting for all.

It was here that Olivier settled in as a "winterer" at the Hudson's Bay Trading Post and here that he met the lovely dark skinned lady in buckskin. She was Josephthe (Suzette) Savard, daughter of Antoine Savard, French Canadian and a metis woman, Marianne Lavallee. In the custom of that time, they were joined in a "mariage du pays" and set about making a home, with Olivier working at the post for a time, bringing in wood, repairing the boats, and general maintenance chores. Later he would venture into the wilds of the big prairie land of the Peace River Country, hunting and trapping fur bearing animals, many of which were beautiful beaver. Josephthe aided him in this task by helping to skin the animals on his return home. The meat of the beaver would be preserved for eating and the skins would be stretched on frames of willow branches drawn in to a circle. There were many periods of absence from the post for Olivier who travelled by snowshoe and with a dogteam following his trapline. Along the way he would always be on the alert for moose and deer, which helped to provide food for the post. The carcasses would be skinned, cut up



and Lake Superior did they have some relief to the endless paddling and portaging. When winds were favorable, they would hoist sail and skim across the open bays from one point to another, ever watching for the sudden summer storms on those large expanses of water.

By the time they had reached Fort William, they had likely spent eight or nine weeks on that portion of the journey, and were ready for a few days rest occasioned by the necessity to rearrange loads. There was usually a great feast and celebration, much hilarity and drinking, which often made for sore heads on the morrow. But to the tune of the violins playing old time reels and jigs, they would dance the night away, and forget tomorrow.

Early in the morning, likely around 2:00 A.M., and not later than 3:00 A.M. the members of the brigades would be aroused for their quick departures with the new loads of provisions which had been sorted and resorted. The brigade returning to Montreal would now be loaded with bundles of furs, wrapped in buffalo hides, new provisions of pemmican and dried meat which they dropped off along the way for use on their journey upstream the following year. These food staples would be left in the storehouses at the various posts. The brigades heading west for the Saskatchewan and Athabasca regions would be transporting their merchandise, tobacco, guns, shot, rum and tobacco. Their canoes were now the "Canots au nord" - twenty five feet long and carried 3,000 to 4,000 lbs., a crew of eight and two passengers. The brigade likely consisted of anywhere from a dozen to two dozen boats. Up the Kaministiquia River (the Kam), they would row, having to negotiate a difficult portage at Kakabeka Falls, one of the highest falls so encountered. They would proceed up stream, past

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BEAVER, BUFFALO ROBES AND BUCKSKIN
A BRIEF HISTORY OF A PIONEER FAMILY OF THE WEST
OLIVIER BELLEROSE AND HIS DESCENDANTS

by Dorothy J. Chartrand, AGS #962

"Bonjour, mon ami, come with me out west where the buffalo herds roam in great numbers, the beaver build big dams and the rivers are full of fish", argued his friend Antoine. And so it was, in 1833, that Olivier Bellerose, age 24, decided to try his luck in the Northwest so many miles away. From his home in Nicolet, Quebec, where his grandfather Joseph Hyacinthe dit Bellrose had migrated from France prior to 1761, Olivier bade farewell to his father Benoni, said sad farewells to his dear brother and sisters there on the shores of the big Lac St. Pierre and headed west up the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. There with his friend Antoine, they approached the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company and signed on as voyageurs to accompany the brigade of boats which would soon be leaving for Rupert's Land. They were outfitted with the necessities of their trade, new capotes, flâches to wrap around their waists, bright leggings, shirts, a blanket or two and the ever present tow-line and harness which they would many times be required to strap over their shoulders while towing the canoe upstream. These 'canots de maitre' measured 36 feet and weighed 600 lbs.

The canoes carried tents and staple foods of tea, sugar, flour, pemmican for the voyageurs. Each canoe was large enough to carry a freight load of approximately three tons, comprised of merchandise, tobacco, kettles, shot, guns and rum. Each crew consisted of twelve middlemen, one bowsman and one steersman. There would be room for a couple of passengers, likely Hudson's Bay Company Factors, post managers or clerks who were heading out for new positions at one of the many trading posts along the way.

Lachine, above the rapids where horses had been used to transport goods, was the starting point of the trip for these voyageurs. There was great confusion and bustling about in readying the loads of provisions and freight for the journey. The Oblate Priest was there to say a pre-dawn Mass and bless the men before they boarded their canoes. Great waving of hands, shouting adieus, and some sadness was apparent as the boisterous adventurers prepared themselves for the journey ahead, like so many gay young soldiers marching off to war.

At the break of dawn, the canoes slipped out into the stream and with the accompaniment of chansons like "En Poulant Ma Boule", or "A La Claire Fontaine", the paddles dipped and splashed as they paddled in unison. It would be a long, day for they were scheduled to row the length of the Lake of Two Mountains before nightfall.

At around 7:00 A.M., they pulled into shore for a quick breakfast of dried meat and hot tea, then it was off again in about half an hour to more singing and rowing. At around noon, they made another stop for food and a welcome break from the arduous task. The hour long stop passed quickly as they bantered back and forth, telling jokes and poking fun at one another in a jovial way. Many of their days would be spent in this manner along the way. After rowing until sundown, they would pull into shore and set up camp for the night - many of them falling into their blankets laid beside the up-turned canoes and their shelter, once their camping chores were completed and their pemmican washed down with scalding tea. If they had passengers, such as a Factor, there would be extra chores of setting up his tent and making things ready for his welfare before they could think of their own.

Some days were spent endlessly loading and unloading their cargo for portages around dangerous rapids of which there were many on the Ottawa River. They travelled the full length of the Ottawa River to Trout Lake, portaged to Lake Nipissing, then along the French River to Georgian Bay. Not until they had reached the shore of Lake Huron

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